NEW

HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

The hallowed history and frightening folklore of this ancient festival

Haunts, Hags & Horror

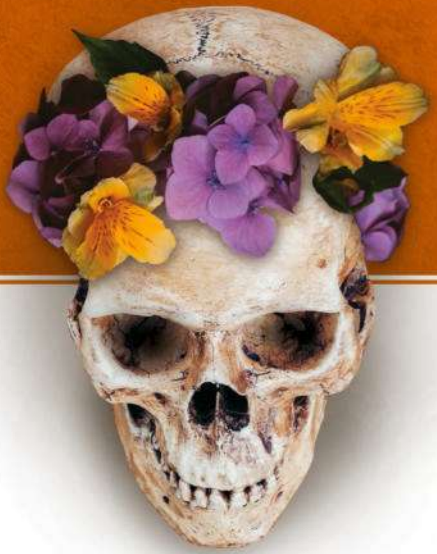
FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY

ANCIENT FESTIVALS • WITCHCRAFT • TODAY'S TRADITIONS

Digital Edition

THIRD EDITION

FUTURE



WELCOME

Dare you open the door to the dark mysteries of Halloween night? In these pages you'll discover how today's trick-or-treaters are the inheritors of some much older traditions. Discover the pagan – and surprisingly, Christian – heritage of All Hallows Eve and the ancient festivals that were its forerunners. Explore similar festivals from around the world that mourn and celebrate the dead and the end of the harvest season, and learn how trick-or-treating has roots deep in the past and across a variety of cultures. Find out about the folk magic rituals that became today's Halloween activities, from the secret sorcery behind apple-bobbing to the reasons why we carve pumpkin lanterns. Explore the complex history of why witches are associated with Halloween and why it's believed that spells become more potent on this arcane evening. Meet some of history's most famous sorceresses and learn why and how they threatened the established order, and discover the eventful life of the founding father of modern pagan witchcraft. Finally, find out how all of these things came together in the United States and how 20th century mass production and Hollywood iconography helped them grow into the distinctive Halloween that we celebrate today. Trick or treat!

FUTURE

HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

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CONTENTS

THE HISTORY

10 Spooky Season
14 The Ancient Witch Religion
20 Religion of the Celts
24 Samhain
26 Ghostly Goings On
30 The Season of Hallowtide

THE WITCHES

38 Why Witches Come Out on Halloween
40 Dawn of the Witch
46 The Ghoul Next Door
50 15 Most Notorious Witches
58 James VI and the Witches
66 Witch Hunting
72 Terror on Pendle Hill
78 The Witches Spellbook
82 Magic in the Age of Enlightenment
88 Gardener's Genesis of Wicca

Thanksgiving Greetings
100

THE TRADITIONS

96 Trick or Treat!

100 Carving Pumpkins

104 How About Them Apples?

106 A Light Against the Dark

108 Soothsaying Superistitions

110 The Dumb Supper

112 A Halloween Banquet

116 Halloween Costumes

118 Halloween Decorations

120 Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark

122 Haunted Houses

124 Modern Halloween

10

14

20

24

THE HISTORY

10 Spooky Season

14 The Ancient Witch Religion

20 Religion of the Celts

24 Samhain

26 Ghostly Goings On

30 The Season of Hallowtide

Costumed partygoers apple-bobbing. Now a party game, in previous centuries it was sometimes a form of divination

Spooky Season

Say the word Halloween and it conjures up images of pumpkins, hauntings, witches, and children hoarding candy. But where did it originate?

Written by Alice Pattillo

While the festival we call Halloween today is a relatively modern phenomenon, its ancestral origins are ancient. Just like its annual trick or treaters, it has taken many guises: From the Irish Samhain ('Summer's End') and the Welsh Nos Galan Gaeaf ('Winter's Eve') to the Scandinavian Vetrnaetr ('Winter Nights') and Anglo-Saxan Blodmonath ('Blood Month'), all are names for the great north European festival that took place at summer's end and gave rise to the customs and rituals we perform today on the night of 31 October..

A pagan pageant

Although Halloween's origins have been widely disputed (and often miscredited), it is generally agreed that our modern day celebration owes a great deal to a number of reported pagan practices marking the end of summer that would take place between October and November. One of the festivals that had a particular impact on the modern Halloween is the Gaelic Samhain (pronounced 'sow-en'), which is often cited to have originated with the Celts of Iron Age Britain. Samhain was an important harvest festival, marking the beginning of winter, while Beltane (held around May Day), another important day according to the Irish sagas, marked its end. Beltane celebrated new life and fertility, while Samhain is opposingly concerned with death and reflection. In days gone by, as winter approached in August through November, people across the Northern hemisphere would harvest their crops and cull livestock, keeping only a few breeding stock through the harsh season. This gave them the opportunity to hold great feasts full of fresh meat and large quantities of grains, fruit and vegetables. It may have also been when the early Brits had access to large amounts of alcohol, allowing them to fully celebrate the spoils of a successful season. Fires would burn bright to bring light to the seemingly never-ending night as the darkness began to creep in towards the midwinter solstice. However, with this merriment and joy came foreboding as the European winter was a brutally cold and terrifying time that many would not survive. So it is only natural, perhaps, that many peoples' attention was swayed towards their own mortality and the nature of death. The modern Halloween has retained such a duality

Folk customs

The practice of mumming is recorded in Scotland at Halloween, where the poor would go door to door begging and performing tricks in return for food and money – an early version of trick-or-treating. Other popular folk practises at Halloween included divination games, snap-apple (the night was known as Snap-Apple night in some areas of the UK) and apple bobbing, cross-dressing, lighting bonfires, and burning nuts. Folk traditions took on a Christian meaning with the advent of Allhallowtide: the practises of mumming and guising became known as souling. Children were sent off in disguises to go door-to-door, often equipped with hollowed-out turnip lanterns (previously said to represent spirits, now thought to represent the souls trapped in Purgatory) and chanting in order to receive traditional 'soul cakes' in return. In Scotland, young men partaking in this tradition would threaten mischief if they were not welcomed – an early example of the malicious modern "tricks" of egging or toilet papering!

A traditional turnip lantern from the early 20th century that would have been carried by soulers on Halloween

of harvest with a heavy dose of macabre, the two essential ingredients that make up our modern day celebrations.

Catholic agenda

While its colourful nature might be courtesy of the Gaelic Celts, the etymology of Halloween is actually Christian in origin. By the seventh century, Catholicism had spread throughout the majority of Europe through the work of missionaries, like St Patrick (the patron saint of Ireland), who successfully converted the previously pagan Celts. The Catholic church used syncretism in order to achieve this, Christianising previously pagan temples, replacing pagan gods with Catholic saints, and swapping out seasonal celebrations with God-approved alternatives. In 609, they had successfully converted the Pantheon pagan temple in Rome to the Santa Maria Rotuna and swapped out the Roman festival of the dead, Lemuria, held on 13 May, for a new day of honouring the saints, dubbed Feast of the Martyrs. At some point during the mid-8th century Pope Gregory III moved this feast to 1 November – the same date as Samhain – and renamed it All Saint's Day. Another hundred years later and the date was cemented in the Catholic calendar by Gregory IV. By the 10th century, All Souls Day was added, a day of remembrance for those departed, while the feasting and sacrificial elements of Samhain became entwined with the Christian festival of Martinmass, held on 11 November. However, the Celts wouldn't give up their folktales and fae, and continued to celebrate Samhain (under the guises of Samuinn in Scotland, Nos Galan Gaeaf in Wales, Sauin in the Isle of Man and Kalan Gwav in Cornwall) in a similar fashion as they had for centuries, only instead of doing so under the supervision of the Druids – who had long since died out – they did so in the name of Christ.

Legends and lore

According to Irish legend, at Samhain, the winter goddess known as the Cailleach would freeze the ground with her mighty staff, shrouding the land in bitterly cold darkness. Medieval folklore reveals that with the seasonal shifts at Samhain and Beltane, the barrier between worlds could be breached and all manner of supernatural spirits and beings could be let loose upon the mortal realm. The mischievous sidhe, or fairy folk, could play tricks on you or even steal you away to their

> "At Samhain, the winter goddess known as the Cailleach would freeze the ground with her mighty staff"

FESTVS
NOVE

Defining moment

All Hallows

800CE

In 800CE Anglo Saxon scholar, Alcuin, recorded All Saints' Day as occurring on 1 November, and it also appeared in a 9th-century English calendar. By 837 Pope Gregory IV had ordered its general observance. In medieval England the festival became known as All Hallows (hallow is an archaic word for a saint or holy person), and Halloween derived from a Scottish slang term for All Hallow's Eve. When All Soul's day was added on 2 November in the 10th century, in order to devote a day for people to pray for their loved ones' safe passage out of Purgatory and into Heaven, the period from 31 October to 2 November was became known as Allhallowtide.

Timeline

700CE

- **First mention of Samhain**
  The oldest version of the Irish tale of *Tochmarc Emire* dates anywhere from the 8th to the 12th century, and is the earliest written account of the Celtic festival of Samhain, "when summer goes to its rest".

700CE

- **All Saint's Day**
  Pope Gregory III made the decision to move the Feast of the Martyrs from its previous springtime date of observance on 13 May to 1 November by dedicating a chapel in St Peter's, Rome, to honour all saints.

1346

- **Black Death**
  The plague of the Black Death rampaged Europe, having a major effect on medieval society as a whole due to its exceptionally high death count. Images of death were brought to the forefront of mainstream culture, including the danse macabre, an artistic genre of allegory portraying the universality of death.

1408

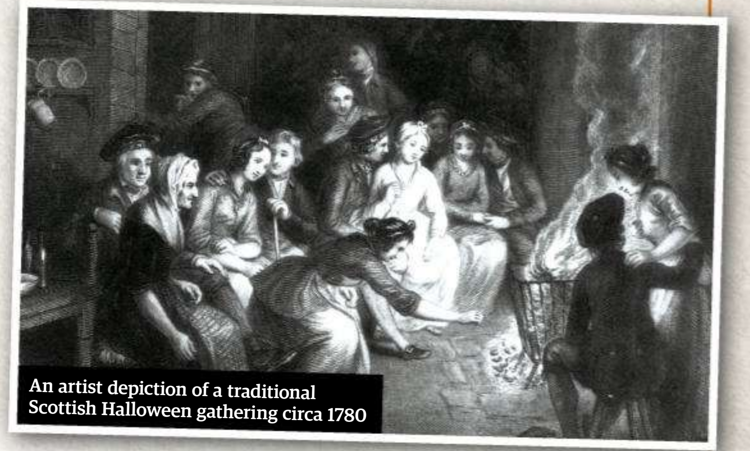
- **Wicked witchery**
  The Witch Hunts began, spreading fear and horror throughout communities across Europe and sparking new folklore about witches gathering on Halloween night for their notorious sabbats.

1493

- **The term Halloween first recorded**
  First recorded mentions of Halloween: "Good frendes suche a date ye shall haue all halowen daye".

1590

- **North Berwick Witch Trials**
  Over 70 Scots were accused of preventing James I from marrying Anne of Denmark by holding a mass on Halloween night, riding the sea in sieves, creating storms and tossing cats tied to human body parts into the water. Halloween would forever be associated with witchcraft thereafter.


An artist depiction of a traditional Scottish Halloween gathering circa 1780

supernatural realm, so food was left outside as offerings. Meanwhile figures like the banshee would bring omens of death, and the souls of the dead could revisit their homes and families seeking hospitality. With this glimpse into the mysterious Otherworld also came a glimpse into your own future, so Samhain was an ideal time to indulge in divination. These myths and celebrations held at the dawn of winter inspired numerous folk customs that later became integral to the celebration of Halloween. In order to avoid the troublesome entities unleashed on November Eve, it is said that people would disguise themselves as one of the supernatural creatures to avoid being captured and taken hostage in the fairy world, a tradition known as guising.

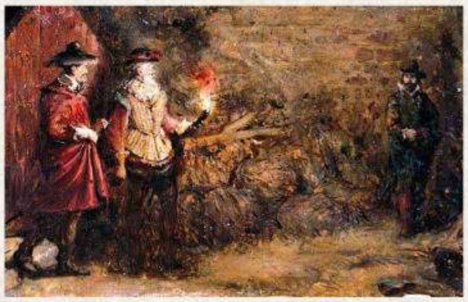
Medieval morbidry

Even though they couldn't shake the Celtic nations' belief in folklore, the church went to work branding their fairies and supernatural beings as evil, satanic creatures rather than merely mischief-making, occasionally malevolent aspects of nature and Samhain became a night of demons and fear. But branding pagan religion as devil-sent allowed former pagans to still maintain faith in their monsters, even if they now feared them, and it also meant their traditions could be kept alive. The 14th century saw the Black Death consume Europe, and a medieval obsession with images of death. Along with the phantoms of the past, the plague doctors and skeletal grim reapers of this very real and contemporary pandemic found a space at All Hallow's Eve, followed quickly by another blight that plagued Europe: witches. The black cat, cauldron and broomstick all became associated with the season due to myths of Halloween hosting witches' sabbats.

Following the reformation, which saw All Saints Day celebrations essentially outlawed during the reigns of Henry VIII and his Protestant daughter Elizabeth I, the popularity of the Catholic All Hallowtide dwindled in England. But many Halloween customs, such as fire-burning and children begging door-to-door were readily replaced by similar practices associated with Guy Fawkes Night during the 17th century. However, the Gaelic-speaking Celtic nations continued many of their folk practices until the 20th century.

All-American holiday

When the Gaelic nations immigrated en masse to the New World in the 19th century, they took not only their Catholic beliefs but those of their ancestors and the ancient Celtic lore of Samhain, and the Halloween night traditions and customs that had been handed down for centuries through generation after generation. Until the arrival of the Scots and the Irish, American puritanical beliefs had stifled the celebration of most festivals, but the Gaels weren't going to let the New World stamp out their identities. North America was hungry for these new immigrants' curious Halloween night festivities with their colourful costumes, dancing, poetry, feasts, fireside games and fortune-telling, and it took on a life of its own, spreading across Canada and the US. The melting pot of cultures proved a fertile ground for a festival seeped in folklore and the supernatural. As Halloween traditions became established in America, they also adopted key components such as the pumpkin, a vegetable not native to Europe but perfect for hollowing out in order to create a Jack O'Lantern, candy corn, and the annual custom of trick-or-treating. Companies were quick to cash in on the budding holiday and by the early 20th century, greetings cards, paper decorations and costumes were all available in aid of Halloween. Quickly the holiday had been repackaged, gift wrapped in orange and black, and was ready to sell back to the nations who inspired it, via television and film. By the 21st century, the majority of the western world and beyond had embraced Halloween and, just like the folklore and customs that encouraged its creation, the spooky celebration continues to be shaped and evolve, adopting other traditions, from the sugar skulls of Dia de los Muertos to the gothic monsters of literature, and horror movie icons.

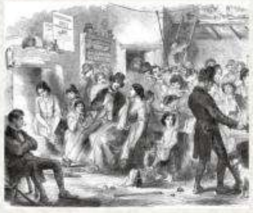


Defining moment

Gunpowder, treason and plot

1605

Catholic Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament but fail. The day, 5 November, becomes a public holiday of anti-Catholic, monarchist, Protestant celebration, taking on elements of traditional Halloween customs, including bonfires and children going house-to-house in rags, begging for coins in the ritual of "a penny for the guy" (a scarecrow-type effigy that represented Guy Fawkes and would be tossed onto the open bonfire). In 1647, all seasonal fire festivals would be banned except Bonfire Night.



Defining moment

Irish immigration to America

1800s

When a large number of Scottish people migrated to Canada, and Irish people migrated to the United States following the potato famine, they took with them their folk traditions, including the various traditions associated with Samhain and All Hallows, such as divination, ghostly superstitions, apple-bobbing, drinking, and merriment.

1927

Trick or treat

Children guising and travelling door to door for treats was already an established tradition when the first recorded use of the phrase "trick or treat" appeared in a Canadian newspaper article. By the 1930s, the term was in use in the northern states of the US too.

1979

Halloween horror

John Carpenter's *Halloween* proved to be a box-office hit, solidifying Halloween as more than just a children's holiday and introducing the rest of the world to how the United States celebrates Halloween.

1980s

Commercialisation

By the 1980s front yards were being decorated, Spirit Halloween's seasonal stores were opened, and horror TV hostess Elvira was dubbed the Queen of Halloween thanks to her campaign with Coors beer – which saw sales surge on 31 October. Halloween was costume party season, and people were hungry for more.

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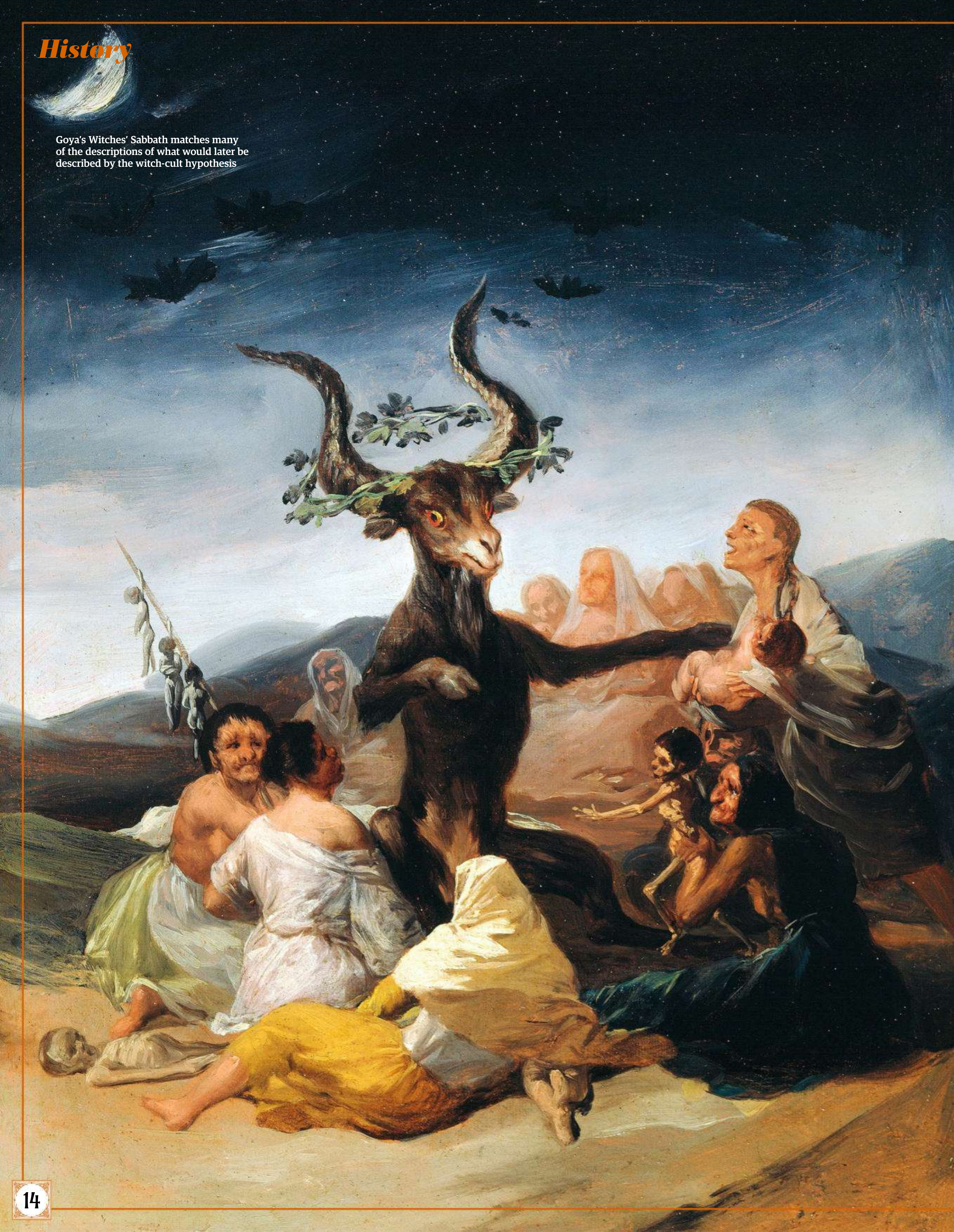


Goya's Witches' Sabbath matches many of the descriptions of what would later be described by the witch-cult hypothesis

The Ancient Witch Religion

Before the coming of Christianity, was there a pagan religion that tied Europe together? And has it survived in an unbroken line to this day?

Written by Ben Gazur

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s entry for witchcraft in the 1929 edition must have surprised many readers of the time. In it the author boldly asserts that:

"When examining the records of the mediaeval [sic] witches, we are dealing with the remains of a pagan religion which survived, in England at least, till the 18th century."

It goes on to describe how followers of this old religion can still be found in France and Italy. Despite the best efforts of the church this religion flourished for centuries. In fact, many priests "were only outwardly Christian and carried on the ancient rites." The encyclopedia termed this movement 'The Witch-cult'.

Through all editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* until the 1960s, this authoritative definition of witchcraft remained in place. It influenced not only the casual reader's view of the history of witchcraft but also played a role in shaping popular books and movies for a generation. Yet today most scholars reject the idea of a pan-European religion of witches.

What was this witch-cult that was apparently so widespread? To look into this we must explore the life and opinions of the author of the entry on witchcraft and the evidence they found for a pan-European pagan belief system.

The greatest proponent of the witch-cult hypothesis was the undoubtedly brilliant and redoubtable Margaret Murray, and it was she who wrote the above statements for the encyclopedia. Others like Karl Ernst Jarke in 1828 had proposed theories that witches were, in fact, followers of a pagan religion, but Murray was the first to fully explore the idea. In the course of her long life (her autobiography, published in 1963, was optimistically titled *My First Hundred Years)* she was an accomplished archaeologist, historian, folklorist, and Egyptologist. She became the first female archaeologist to teach at a British university, but her research could not be contained in any one area. Even as a child Murray had taken note of the rhymes and folklore told by the old people who lived nearby. Her interest became more focused when she spent time in Glastonbury and began to ponder the legends of the Holy Grail. She collected items related to witchcraft and even donated a bottle to the Ashmolean Museum that was said to contain a trapped witch inside it.

Murray's witch bottle was recently displayed at the Ashmolean Museum's Spellbound exhibition about magic

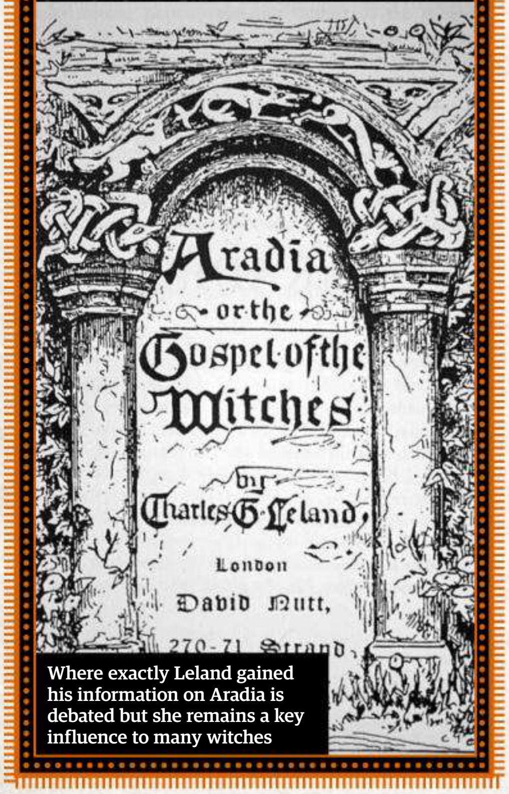
In 1917 Murray presented a paper called 'Organisations of Witches in Great Britain.'

Aradia, the witch messiah

Charles Leland was convinced that an ancient religion of witches existed. From this belief he concluded that there may well be a holy scripture used by them, and set out to find it. Published in 1899, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, is the result of his research.

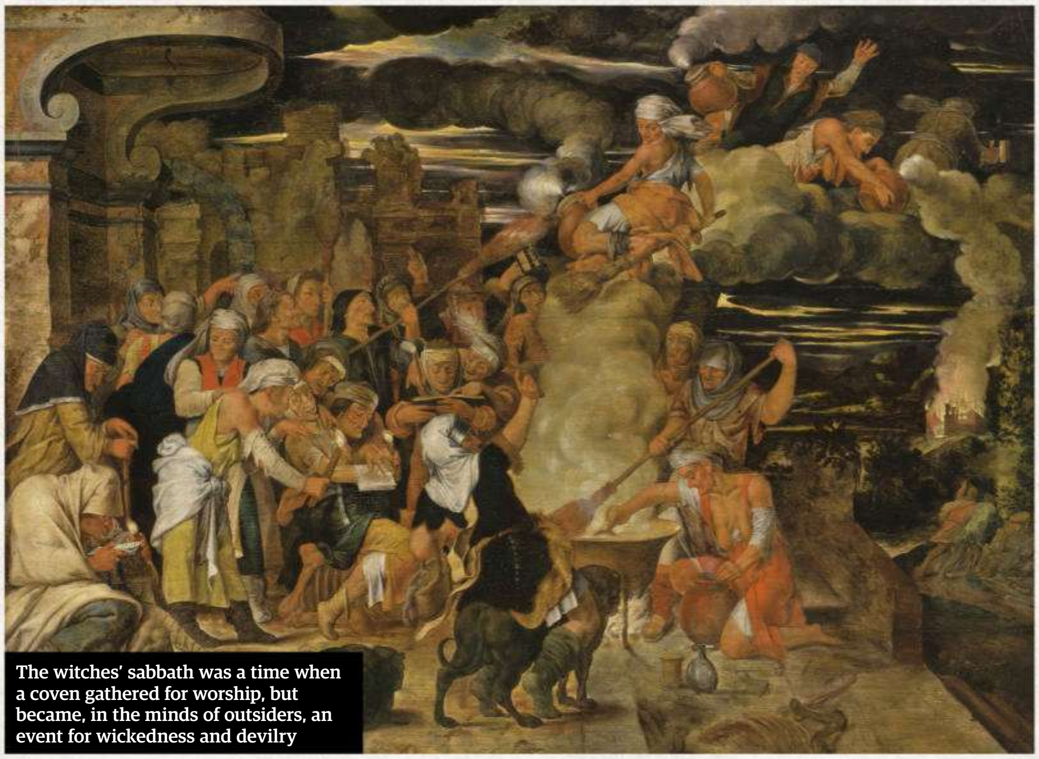
The prose and poems of the book describe how the goddess Diana was impregnated by her brother, the light-bringer Lucifer. When Diana gives birth to a girl she names her Aradia. Aradia is given the task of teaching witches how to protect the weak against the strong. Aradia then departs, but calls her witches to gather naked each Full Moon in the forest to celebrate with a consecrated meal called the Sabbat. Back in the heavens with her mother, Aradia can still be called on to use her powers.

The text of Leland's *Aradia* covers more of the legends associated with Diana but also describes practical magic. Should you want to have a good vintage of wine, it tells you how to pray to the goddess. If it is love you want, then there is a spell for that. Aradia is now a central figure in many Wiccan sects.



Aradia
or the
Gospel of the
Witches
by
Charles G. Leland
London
David Nutt,
270-71 Strand

Where exactly Leland gained his information on Aradia is debated but she remains a key influence to many witches



The witches' sabbath was a time when a coven gathered for worship, but became, in the minds of outsiders, an event for wickedness and devilry

This marked the beginning of the witch-cult hypothesis. As Murray remarked, until that point witch rituals and cults had not been subjected to scientific study. Over 31 pages of immaculately sourced research, Murray did exactly that. This paper was followedup by several books that further explored the witch-cult: *The Witch-cult in Western Europe*, *The God of the Witches*, and *The Divine King in England*. Her findings were startling to some, but utterly bewitching to others.

Murray's description of the witch-cult is vivid and fascinating. She never argues that magic is objectively real but instead studies the beliefs held by witches themselves, in just the same way an anthropologist may study the belief system of any other faith: as an example of belief, without questioning its reality, veracity, or lack thereof.

The significance of the number 13 to magical practitioners is highly influenced by Margaret Murray's theories about it

Murray believed that by studying ancient myths, legends, and historical records, a conserved set of rituals found in many countries and many times could be discerned. These existed as a religion followed by many people, but with the spread of Christianity, the older pagan ways had to be suppressed. At first it was only kings and lords who converted, leaving the majority of people still following the old faith. In many early texts produced by the church, references to devilry and magic can be found that show how they tried to eradicate the religion of the witches.

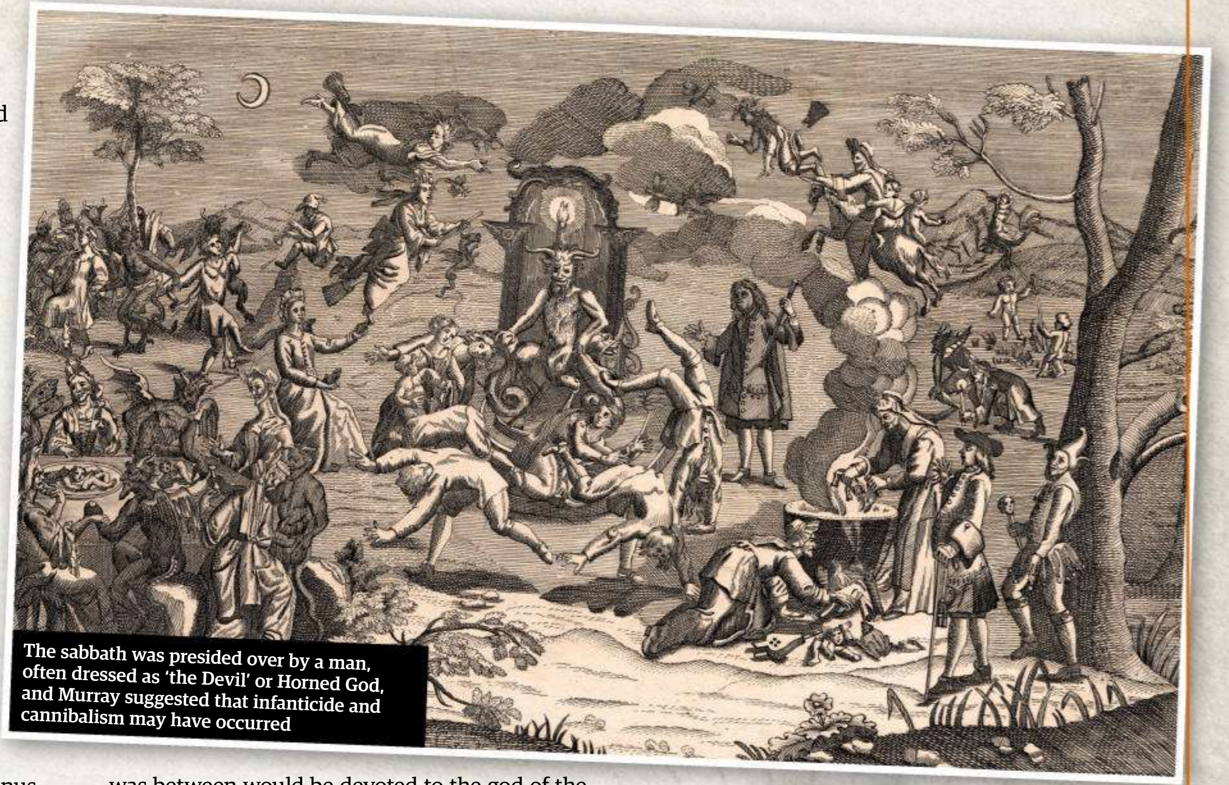
A 7th century Archbishop of Canterbury had to issue a decree against anyone who:

> "…goes about as a stag or a bull; that is, making himself into a wild animal, and dressing in the skin of a herd animal, and putting on the heads of beasts; those who in such wise transform themselves into the appearance of a wild animal, penance for three years; because this is devilish."

From sources such as these Murray was able to reconstruct what she believed were the inner workings of the witch-cult. Each coven of exactly 13 members (a devil's dozen) was led by a master, often called 'the Devil' by Christian investigators. This person was considered a god incarnate by the witches and had to be obeyed in all things. He also had the task of instructing his witches in the performance of magic and rituals.

Murray was not concerned in her works with operative magic - casting spells and curses - she

"Murray's description of the witch-cult is vivid and fascinating"


The sabbath was presided over by a man, often dressed as 'the Devil' or Horned God, and Murray suggested that infanticide and cannibalism may have occurred

instead studied ritual magic; the beliefs and actions that underpinned the society of witches. It is this organisation of witches that was focused on the Devil, as she called the head of a coven. Indeed the witches themselves in their testimonies at trials always claimed it was 'the Devil' they were meeting. He – Murray concludes the leader of a coven was almost always male – would conduct the religious services observed on the witches' sabbath and often led his colleagues in fertility dances. Sometimes he would appear to his followers either dressed in the form of an animal or be represented at a sabbath by a real animal. Sometimes the witches would know the true identity of their master, but sometimes it might be a mystery as to who was leading them.

The god worshipped by the witches was a matter of dispute. Sometimes it was a two-faced deity called Janus or Dianus, who was one of the earliest gods known to the Romans. Murray sometimes refers to the witch-cult as the Dianic cult in honour of their god. In later work Murray posits a Horned God, perhaps Pan or Cernunnos, at the centre of witch worship. All manner of horned creatures can be seen as its manifestations. The Minotaur, Herne the Hunter, and Naigamesha all show its hallmarks. Headdresses made from the skulls and antlers of deer have been found that are approximately 11,000 years old and may well represent objects used in religious rites. If outsiders glimpsed a man dressed as this Horned God it is easy to see how witches could have been interpreted as literal devil worshippers by them.

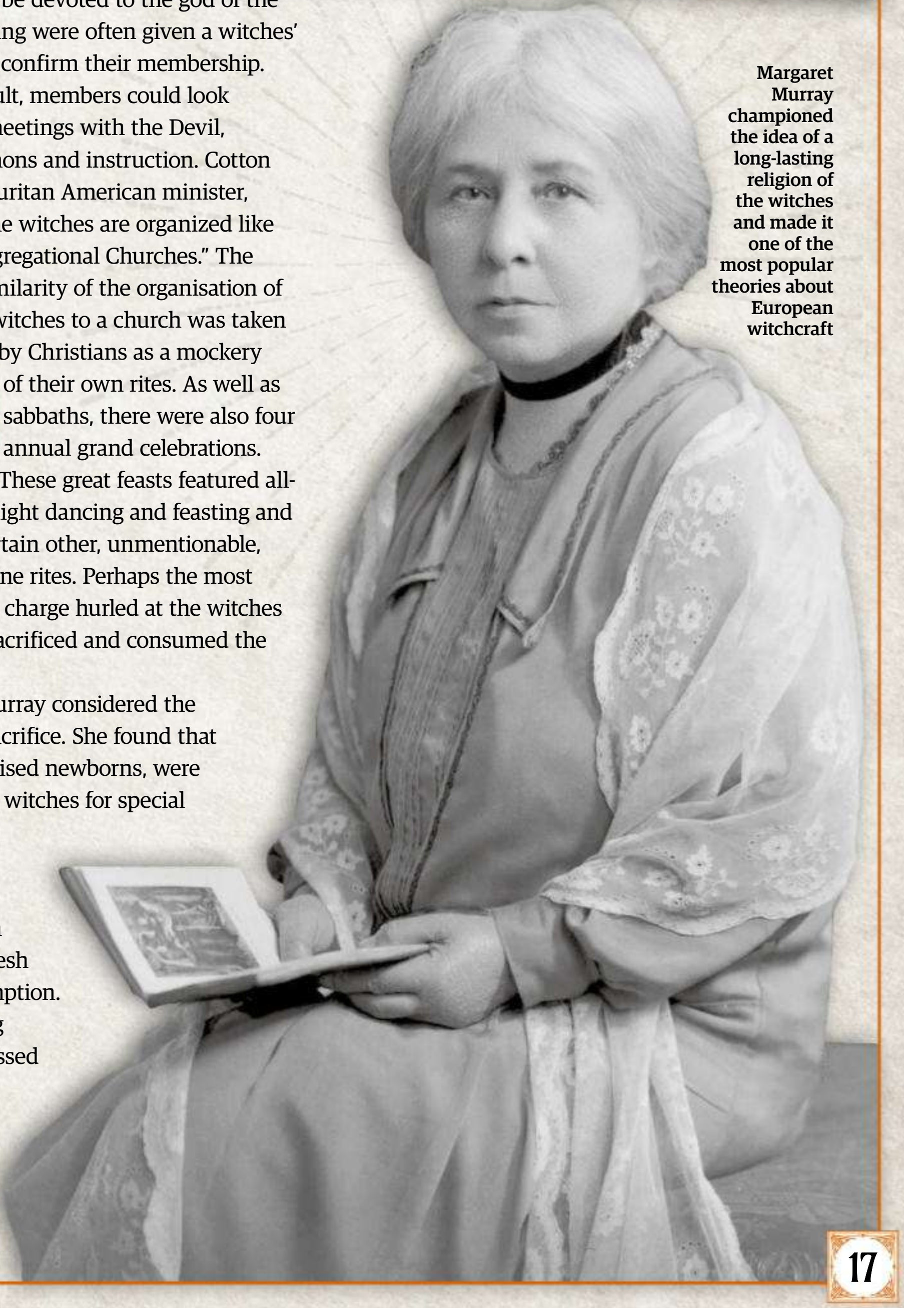
Murray theorised that folkloric traditions like Dorset's Horned Ooser were survivals from the witch-cult

The Devil who presided over the coven could be a harsh master. Absence from a sabbath could lead to a whipping or beating with an iron rod. Several witches' confessions refer to the Devil bearing this iron rod and using it when people tried to quit the cult. Those who attempted to reveal the secrets of the witches were put to death. As the Roman Catholic church would often call for the death of all witches, it is not hard to see why a witch-cult might want to remain a private, anonymous club.

Those who were born to members of the witch-cult were introduced to it at a very young age, as soon as they could talk. Those seeking to convert from Christianity were first forced to renounce their baptism. They then placed one hand on the head and one on the foot and swore that all that was between would be devoted to the god of the witches. People joining were often given a witches' mark somewhere to confirm their membership.

Once inside the cult, members could look forward to regular meetings with the Devil, which featured sermons and instruction. Cotton Mather, the Puritan American minister, said "The witches are organized like Congregational Churches." The similarity of the organisation of witches to a church was taken by Christians as a mockery of their own rites. As well as sabbaths, there were also four annual grand celebrations. These great feasts featured all-night dancing and feasting and certain other, unmentionable, obscene rites. Perhaps the most offensive charge hurled at the witches was that they sacrificed and consumed the flesh of babies.

In a 1918 paper Murray considered the evidence for child sacrifice. She found that babies, often unbaptised newborns, were sometimes taken by witches for special services. Here the babies would be killed, often by inserting a needle in the brain, and the flesh prepared for consumption. One way of ensuring witches never confessed was to feed them the tongue of a baby – this way


Margaret Murray championed the idea of a long-lasting religion of the witches and made it one of the most popular theories about European witchcraft

the witch's own tongue would be as powerless as a baby's to reveal their secrets. Later, in *The God of the Witches*, Murray dialled back her discussions of child sacrifice and dark magic to make the witch-cult more palatable. Adults could also serve as sacrifices. Murray thought that the traditional stories of selling one's soul to the devil could be derived from witches buying the right to live for pleasure for seven years, if they are willing to die when those seven years are up. In *The Divine King in England*, Murray traces sacrifices tied to the kings of Britain from William the Conqueror to James I. These deaths range from the mysterious shooting of William II with an arrow to the murder of Thomas Becket, possibly at the King's command. She claimed other famous people may have served as voluntary sacrifices to the witch-cult, including Joan of Arc and early serial killer Gilles de Rais.

The Horned God

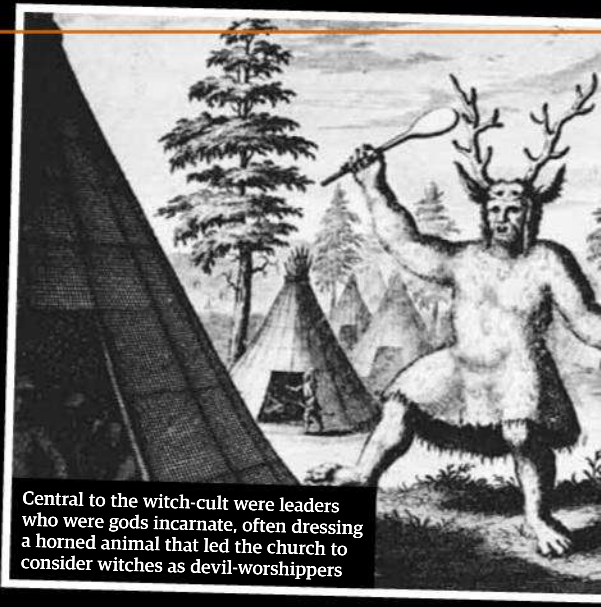
According to the witch-cult hypothesis the central figure of veneration was a Horned God representing fertility. At meetings the leader of a coven would embody the god and even dress up as the deity. One of the reasons that Christians were so hostile to witch-cults was because the god of the witches so much resembled the Christian idea of the Devil.

Images of horned gods can be attested well into prehistory. In the Cave of the Trois-Freres in France around 13,000 BCE, someone sketched high on a wall the image of a man with an animal tail and the antlers of a deer. The discoverer of this picture called it 'The Sorcerer' and Margaret Murray thought it the earliest depiction of a deity on Earth. Today the Horned God is often called Cernunnos, after a Gallo-Roman sculpture from the 1st century CE was discovered with that name and the image of an antlered figure. In Wiccan belief, the Horned God can represent the masculine, but also animals and the vital forces of the wild. Some consider him the god who carries the souls of the dead to the afterlife. He is often paired with the Goddess as one of two chief gods.

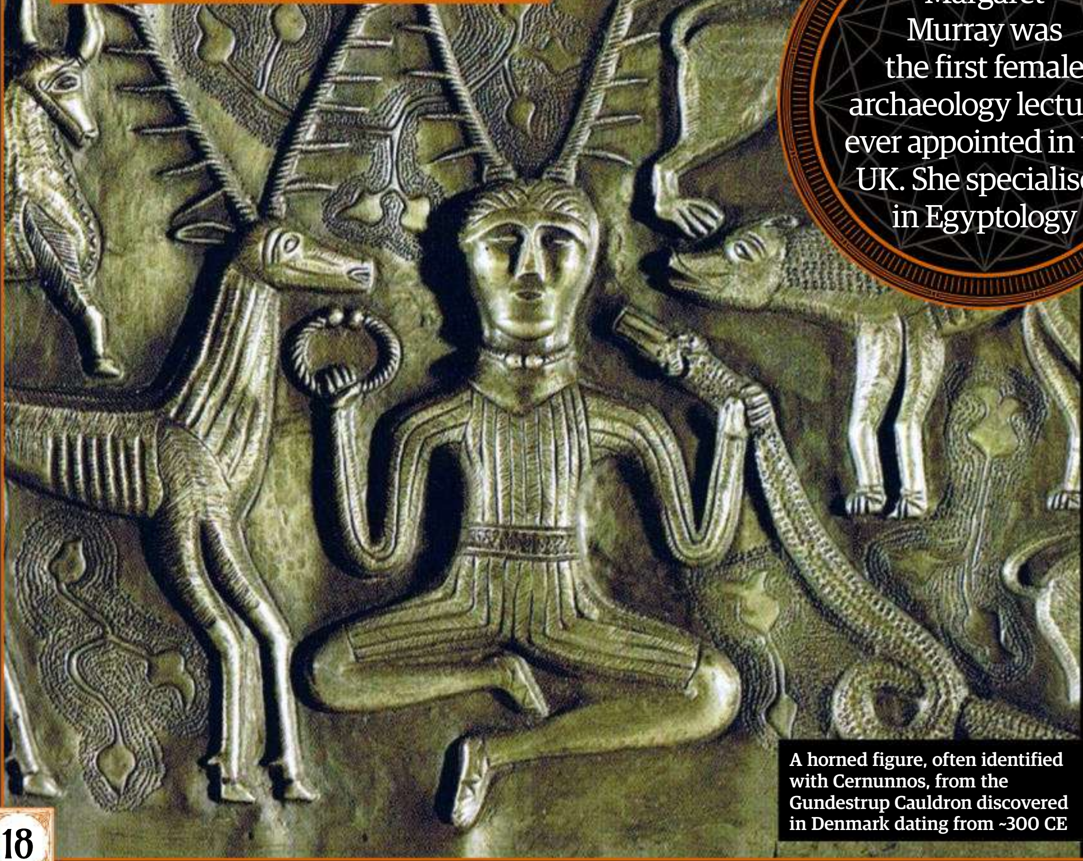
Thus a whole religion can be traced from the horned figures painted on cave walls in the Neolithic age to the early modern world before Christianity finally triumphed and eradicated the witch-cult. Yet even then there were those who would not let it die.

Margaret Murray's work was influenced by the anthropological studies of George Frazer as published in *The Golden Bough*. In that book Frazer compared religions and folklore from around the world in an attempt to find commonalities. He developed the theory that many myths in many places can be traced back to fertility rites and that many depended on the sacrifice (often symbolic) of a king or god who would later rise again.

Frazer took the title of his book from a painting by Turner, also called 'The Golden Bough', which showed a scene from the *Aeneid* where a golden branch is offered to Hades to allow Aeneas to pass into the underworld. Just as Aeneas would return from death, so too would the god of the fertility cults. He would die at the harvest, as crops do, but return to life in the spring, like a mythical vegetation god.



Central to the witch-cult were leaders who were gods incarnate, often dressing a horned animal that led the church to consider witches as devil-worshippers



A horned figure, often identified with Cernunnos, from the Gundestrup Cauldron discovered in Denmark dating from ~300 CE

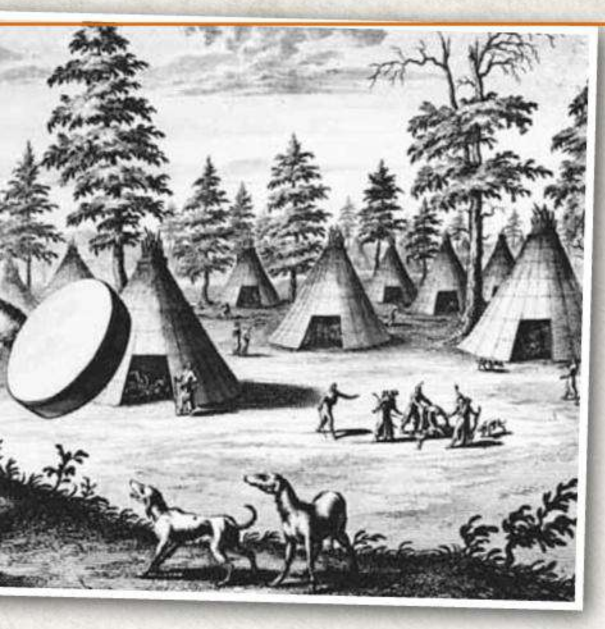
Margaret Murray was the first female archaeology lecturer ever appointed in the UK. She specialised in Egyptology

That Frazer found echoes of these fertility rites and beliefs in many cultures obviously strengthened Margaret Murray's thesis of a widespread witch-cult. Nor was the witch-cult hypothesis the first sympathetic reassessment of witchcraft. *La Sorcière* by Jules Michelet recast the victims of the witch trials as women rebelling against the brutalities of life under feudalism and the church. They were desperate people turning to sorcery in search of the wealth and power that was denied to them by their social betters. They were not themselves heirs to an ancient cult but they took inspiration from folklore and myth.

Charles Leland claimed to have discovered that societies of witches still existed and followed what he called the Old Religion. *Aradia*, published in 1899, is the result of his search for a 'gospel' of that faith. Many of the beliefs attested in it, such as witches' meetings called 'sabbats', would later be found in Margaret Murray's witch-cult hypothesis too.

The grounds for proposing a witch-cult had already been set out, but it was Murray's scholarship that gave it greater credence. As soon as it was published it met a very willing audience. Thanks to its success, Murray was given the job of producing the entry on witchcraft for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1929, introducing her witch-cult theory to even more people. It was an attractive theory to sceptics who denied that witchcraft was real and to believers who saw magic as part of their heritage.

Among believers was the author Robert Graves. In his book *The White Goddess* he argued for the existence of mainly matriarchal societies in prehistory that worshipped a female deity. He gathered evidence from many cultures but insisted that the truth could only be viewed by those with a poetic mind. Indeed his whole work only makes



sense if one uses poetic logic and accepts many ‘if-then’ arguments. Graves further publicised his theory in his often-idiosyncratic retellings of the Greek myths and a novel, *Seven Days in New Crete*, which imagined a world where worship of the goddess was widespread. In his works he reconstructed a Celtic tree goddess called Druantia (from the Gaelic word for ‘oak’; the word ‘druid’ shares the same root) who has since been adopted by Neopagans as a fertility deity.

Opinion is still split over Murray and her work, and later criticism often overshadows her initial academic reputation

Graves was not the only person influenced by the witch-cult hypothesis who has helped shape modern beliefs. Gerald Gardner was one of the most influential voices in modern Wicca. A keen follower of the witch-cult hypothesis, he thought the underlying religion had long ago died out, until he apparently discovered a surviving coven practising in southern England’s New Forest. Using the knowledge he learned there, Gardner wrote many of the foundational texts of Wicca and helped to create several other covens. Gerald’s influential book *Witchcraft Today* was published with an introduction by Margaret Murray.

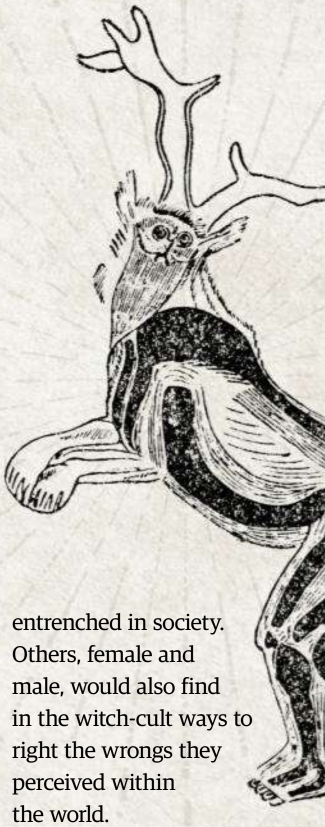
Problems with the witch-cult and the other early studies of comparative anthropology soon emerged. Fieldwork and discussions with people living in the cultures Frazer had described showed he had often misunderstood their beliefs. As Margaret Murray said herself in the opening line of *The Witch-cult in Western Europe*, “The subject of Witches and Witchcraft has always suffered from the biased opinions of the commentators.” Many felt that she fell into her own trap and that the evidence used by Murray and Frazer was cherry-picked to fit their pre-conceived notions of what they thought they would find.

Historians found Murray’s reliance on the testimonies given at witch trials troubling. That most of these confessions would have been given under duress does not feature in Murray’s analysis. For her the witches speak nothing but the truth. Modern research shows how close questioning of a subject can get them to confirm almost anything an interrogator suggests.

Many scholars today question the conclusions Murray drew from her extensive research. Some of her findings, such as that ‘the Devil’ always wore a hat, are superficial and silly-sounding today. But she also believed that legends of fairies may have been a reference to a diminutive race of humans who once shared the land with modern humans and who may have passed some of their religion to the witches. Archaeological searches have been unable to confirm their existence, but Murray’s academic position at University College London gave her theory a patina of respectability.

Some also find fault with Murray’s affection for numerology. Any time the numbers 13 or seven could be found she took it as proof of the influence of the witch-cult. That the Order of the Garter originally had 26 members is evidence that King Edward III formed it on the basis of two covens (2 x 13). The opposite is also true in that sometimes the avoidance of the number 13 is held up as evidence of a conscious desire to rebel against the old religion. If you look closely at many numbers you will find them in some way derived from or related to 13 or seven.

Yet to attack the minutiae of the witch-cult hypothesis is perhaps to miss the important points raised by the theory and the longings that underpinned it. Murray was a supporter of women’s suffrage who marched in several demonstrations. She may have been aware of the work of American suffragette Matilda Joslyn Gage, who thought of the persecution of the witches as nothing but an expression of the misogyny deeply entrenched in society. Others, female and male, would also find in the witch-cult ways to right the wrongs they perceived within the world.



The Sorcerer, a cave painting of a man with antlers, may reveal beliefs in horned gods going back many thousands of years

Were there religions that pre-dated and permeated Europe before the advent of Christianity? Undoubtedly there were. Can oral tradition preserve practices and traditions for centuries? We know this is true. Is it possible that a folk religion could have continued in some form? Absence of evidence is not always evidence of absence. All we can say for certain is that many today do still ascribe to the witch-cult hypothesis.

As the work of Murray and others has been incorporated into Wicca and other Neopagan belief systems, we can see how powerful the idea is. Many worship the Great Horned God and the Great Moon Goddess. Ask a Pagan practitioner today and they are likely to tell you they feel a powerful connection to an ancient tradition. Whether this is the one suggested by Murray may be up for debate, but the influence of the witch-cult hypothesis most certainly isn’t.

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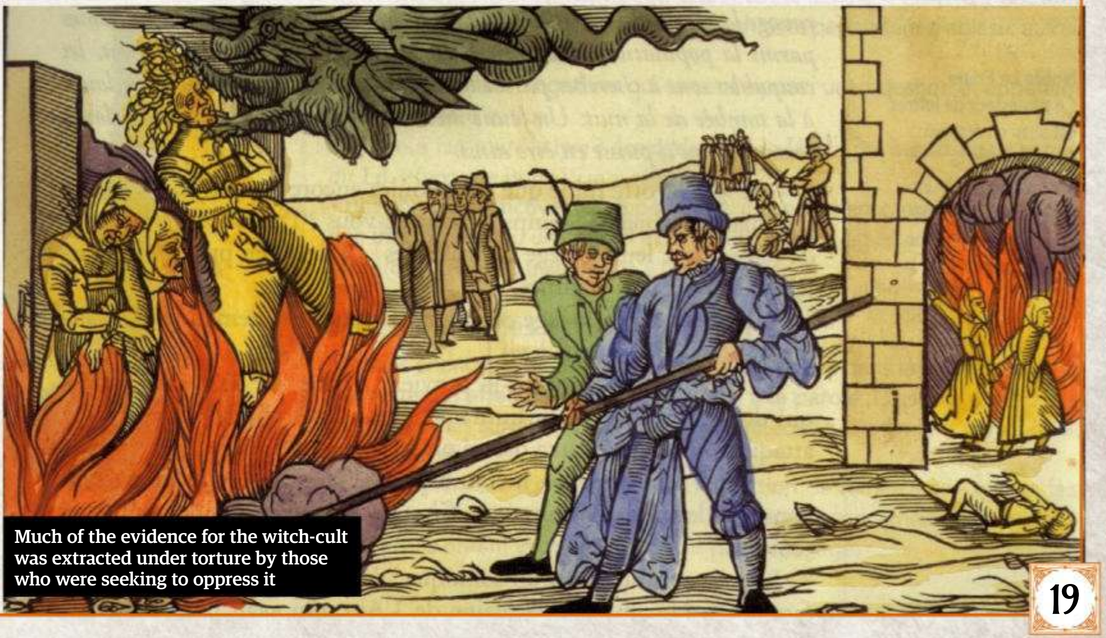


Much of the evidence for the witch-cult was extracted under torture by those who were seeking to oppress it

Religion of the Celts

Celtic paganism spanned a thousand years and the entire European continent, yet is little known today. Who were the mysterious worshippers in those dark forests?

Written by Ben Gazur

The forests, hills, and plains of Europe were terrifying for the ancient Greeks and Romans. The primordial gloom of woods where no civilised person set foot was the location of human sacrifice and dark rites. The north, east, and west of the continent was the home of barbarians, and these people they called the Celts.

While the classical world tended to think of them as a single society, the reality was a patchwork of tribes and peoples. The Celts may have shared much linguistically and culturally but they were never one nation. From Spain to Bulgaria, the wilds of Scotland to the Mediterranean, and over a thousand years many local differences in their religion evolved. Celtic paganism is a difficult faith to firmly grasp.

Relying on hostile sources such as Caesar obviously requires care. In his work Caesar did not give the gods of the Gauls their native names but referred to them by their Roman counterparts, claiming the main deity of the Gauls was Mercury. The Gaulish Celts apparently had many images of their gods, but the archaeological evidence for this is scant. It may be that the Celts of Gaul used wooden statues of their gods and that these have not survived. Some scholars dispute this and believe that the Celtic tribes mostly worshipped in nature and their gods were not personified in human form.

In the evidence we have of Celts, from Britain all the way to modern Turkey, we find mention of hundreds of deities by name, many mentioned only once. It may be that these gods were very local and specific to a tribe. The goddess Sequana had power over the river Seine, and Celts hundreds of miles away would have no need of her aid. It may also be that many names may refer to one god known by different epithets in different places. It is also true that many gods were worshipped across wide areas.

Many place-names throughout Europe make reference to a god known as Lugus. Lyon in France, Lothian in Scotland, and Legnica in Poland are all named in his honour. The god Lugh of the Irish Celts, again related to Lugus, displayed many of the attributes Caesar described the Celtic 'Mercury' having. He was a god of skills, arts, and good kingship. Votive inscriptions and descriptions in Irish and Welsh poetry paint Lugus as a brave, noble and ideal sovereign, the epitome of kingly virtues..

Other gods from across the Celtic tribes may lack the same name but can be placed into categories that clearly crossed tribal boundaries. Mother-goddesses, called Matres, have been

The Celtic world was full of deities, monsters, and heroes. The Gundestrup Cauldron shows many scenes of Celtic myth

Image source: Nationalmuseet

Influence on Christianity

Celtic paganism was absorbed into Roman religion in many areas, but in the relatively un-Romanised Ireland it was Christianity that submerged it. Medieval Irish texts that preserved Celtic tales were sometimes glossed by the scribes who copied them to suggest that paganism prefigured the coming of Christianity. The replacement of Celtic polytheism was not total though and some aspects ended up within Irish Christianity. The horned god Cernunnos appears to have influenced the image of St Ciaran who is said to have lived in the forest and whose first followers were animals. This syncretism may have smoothed the adoption of Christianity for the Irish Celts.

St Brigid is one of the most important saints of Ireland, yet there are some scholars who doubt her historical existence because St Brigid shares her name with a Celtic goddess. It seems that this goddess was simply adopted into Christianity as a saint. The goddess was a nurturing one, and similar imagery and miracles are given to both. Both are associated with holy wells in Kildare and sacred flames guarded by attendants were used in the worship of both.

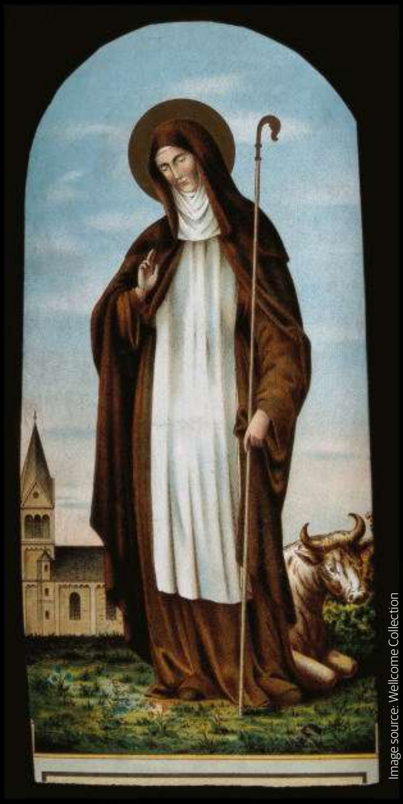


Image source: Wellcome Collection

Despite the obvious Christian imagery surrounding depictions of St Brigid many think she was once a pagan deity

> "The number of deities with power and lethal prowess in battle is extensive"

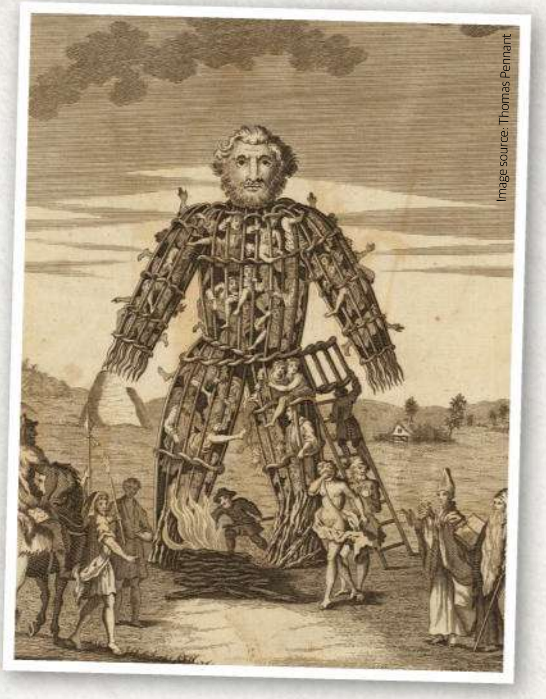


Image source: Thomas Pennant

found throughout north-western Europe. Mostly shown on altars and statues as a group of three these goddesses were popular Celtic deities that were associated with sacrifice but also with bounty. One of the goddesses is always depicted with an overflowing basket of fruit and vegetables.

> In Ireland, Celtic paganism had a profound effect on Christianity, with deities reinterpreted as Christian saints

War must have been a major aspect of life in the Celtic tribes. The number of deities with power and lethal prowess in battle is extensive. For the Celts it seems that war itself was embodied by a goddess. In southern Gaul a warrior might invoke Andarta but when Boudicca rode down the Romans in Britain she called out for aid from Andraste. In Ireland the Morrigan was a triple goddess who personified the havoc of battle, the skill of arms, and the playing out of fate in warfare. It is impossible though to know if Celts from different areas would have accepted these variously named deities as the same goddess.

Perhaps the most striking Celtic deity was the Horned God. Images and statues from across Europe have been found of a man crowned by a pair of antlers. His widespread depiction suggests he developed early in the Celtic period and was important in the pagan pantheon. Often called Cernunnos, the god is sometimes surrounded by animals, especially deer. His partially animal form may suggest a strong link with nature. From what we know of Celtic pagan practices, nature was of paramount importance.

Much of what we know about the ancient Celts comes from outside sources. In particular the Celts themselves never wrote down their religious beliefs. Caesar in his *Conquest of Gaul* mentions that this was to stop the spread of the doctrines outside their priestly class, the druids, and to preserve the skills of those who memorised the lore of the Celts. People who write things down, it was thought, tend to forget those things. Unfortunately what those things they wanted remembered were have been forgotten.

Druidic training in the Celtic religion could last for 20 years and they were leaders in society as well as in religion. Druids acted a repositories of history, lore, medicine, and law. Called on to advise kings they could also pass legal sentences. Yet their most important role was in acting as intermediaries between the Celts of Gaul, Britain, and Ireland, and the gods. One druid, named Diviciacus, impressed the Roman statesman Cicero with his ability to predict the future through augury.

Druids have left no material presence in the archaeological record. It seems that they performed their rituals in groves in forests. Pliny the Elder describes white robed druids climbing oak trees to harvest mistletoe with a golden sickle. The mistletoe was used to cure all manner of ailments as long as it did not touch the ground. The knowledge of botany and medicine was inseparable from druidic religion.

Though individual Druids may have pleased the Romans and impressed the Greeks with their knowledge of natural philosophy, as a class they were seen as a threat. The druids taught the theory of transmigration of souls, a form of reincarnation, and this was thought to make Celts fight more fearlessly, as they were not afraid of dying in battle.

The idea of human sacrifice may also have unnerved the Romans. Many sources mention

This Celtic wagon was designed for ritual use and would have been used in sacrifice or for libations

Image source: NearEMPTiness

druids offering up human victims, including Caesar's description of burning them in wicker cages, and there is some evidence to support these claims. Bog bodies, corpses superbly preserved in bogs across Europe, are often found to have been ritually strangled, and must have played some part in Celtic religion.

Once Gaul and Britain were conquered in the 1st century CE the Romans set about civilising their new subjects – and that required suppression of the druids. Tacitus records how almost the entire Roman army in Britain was used to drive out the druids, finally pushing them to the Welsh island of Anglesey, on the north-western coast:

"On the shore stood the opposing army with its dense array of armed warriors, while between the ranks dashed women, in black attire like the Furies, with hair dishevelled, waving brands. All around, the Druids, lifting up their hands to heaven, and pouring forth dreadful imprecations, scared our soldiers by the unfamiliar sight, so that, as if their limbs were paralysed, they stood motionless, and exposed to wounds."

The druids used all their power of language and religious authority but it was no match for legionary forces. The druidic tradition in Britain withered thereafter, though it may have survived in Ireland for several more centuries.

Yet the death of the druids was not the collapse of Celtic religion. There were still those Celts who lived outside the Roman Empire in the east. Even within the borders of the Empire people still continued to worship the old gods. The Romans did not insist on religious purity. As long as the gods of Rome were respected, and sacrifices made in the Emperor's name, then people were free to worship any other gods they wanted.

Where the Romans found Celtic sites of worship they erected temples and shrines. Springs and rivers were places where Celts offered gifts to the gods. By building Roman-style temples they regularised worship there and brought the Celts into the Roman world. Romans also associated native gods with their own. The Celtic Sulis worshipped at Bath became Sulis Minerva. Yet the influence was not all in one direction.

Epona is the Celtic goddess of the horse. For the ancient tribes, horses were vital. Though her name is Gaulish, depictions of a maiden on a horse have been found throughout Europe. The martial Romans adopted Epona into their religion as a protector of cavalry. Apuleius describes a shrine in a stable being decorated with roses and inscriptions invoking Epona have even been found in Rome itself. Conquerers are often conquered by those they subjugate.

Image source: Rosemania

Samhain

Halloween may have largely replaced it, but Samhain is still one of the most important festivals in the Pagan year

Written by Ben Gazur

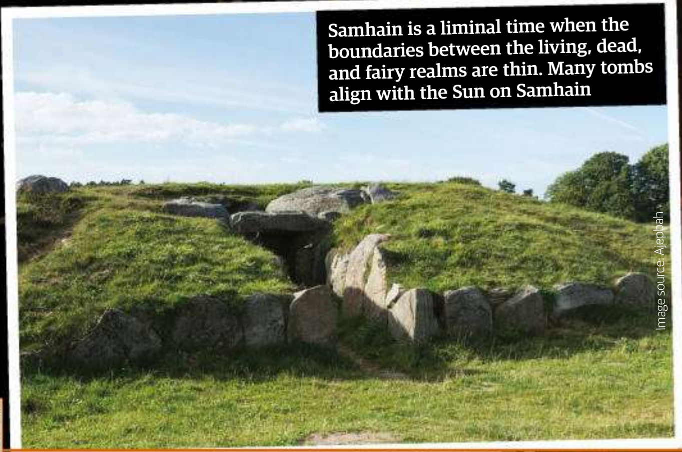
Samhain, falling on 31 October, is the last of the three harvest festivals for Pagans. It also marks the true beginning of winter and was seen as a day of the dead. Several Neolithic tombs were constructed in such a way that the light of sunrise on Samhain would illuminate the interior. The Christian Allhallowtide held on the same day may preserve this association with the dead, as its ringing of church bells is thought to provide comfort to the departed.

The early descriptions of Samhain in Irish literature show it as a time to end farming and warfare and to gather families and tribes together to survive the winter. In the cold nights there was much drinking and tale-telling to pass the time. Samhain itself was a time of potential danger, as the fairies would open their mounds and it was possible for the dead to return from the spirit realm. Samhain was the time when cattle and other livestock were slaughtered and preserved for winter and it may have been a time that was associated with sacrifices.

On Samhain the fire in the hearth was allowed to burn out while people worked in the fields. That night bonfires were lit to ward off evil and fire was taken from these to relight the home fires. The smoke from the great fires was thought to be protective. Sometimes two fires were lit and villagers and livestock would pass between them.

Today bonfires are still lit at Samhain. Major cities such as Edinburgh see large processions of people carrying flaming torches alongside drums and music. Traditionally the festivities of Samhain could be accompanied by dressing up and disguise. Boys would sometimes go from house to house to beg wood to be added to the communal fire. To light the way revellers carved lanterns from turnips and wurzels. It is easy to see how Samhain influenced the later traditions of Halloween, which many people celebrate today.

For modern Pagans, Samhain is both a time to remember the dead and to celebrate. Feasts are often held as a way of offering hospitality to the deceased. You may want to bake a batch of soul cakes to offer to the poor. It is also a time to introduce newborns to the community. Samhain can be the proper moment to reflect on things that have ended in the past year, as well as the hopes for what may come in the next.



Samhain is a liminal time when the boundaries between the living, dead, and fairy realms are thin. Many tombs align with the Sun on Samhain

Image source: Ajepbah

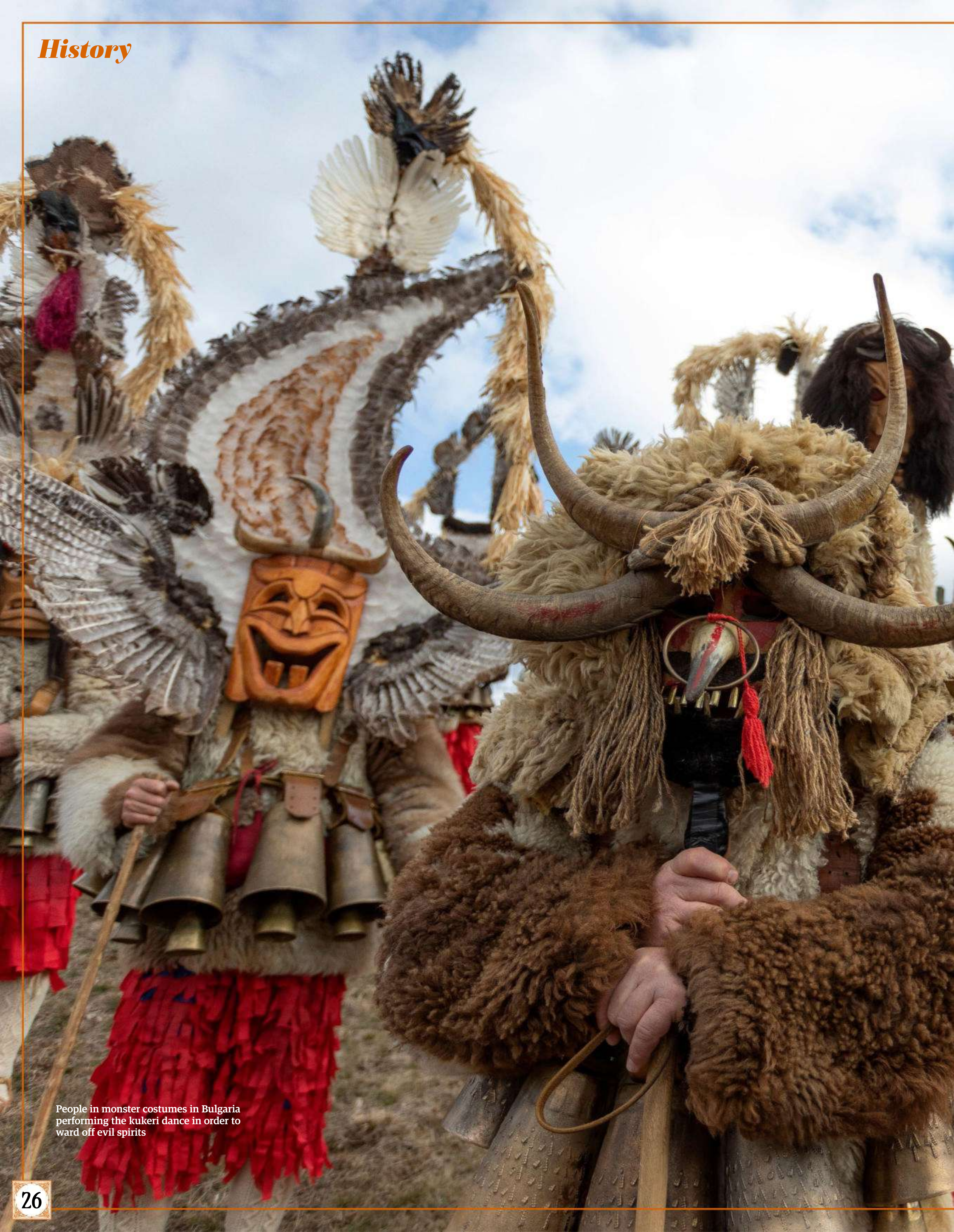
Image source: Getty

Fire and mummery has long been a part of celebrating Samhain; early pagans dressed as animals and spirits

Samhain brings Pagans together to celebrate life and death as they remember those who have passed on

> The boundaries between the human world and those of the fairies and the dead are thought to grow thin and permeable at Samhain

Image source: Getty



People in monster costumes in Bulgaria performing the kukeri dance in order to ward off evil spirits

Ghostly Goings On

The core aspects of Halloween, such as reverence for the dead, divination rituals, warding off evil, and celebration of harvest, are universal. In fact, cultures from all over the world have similar festivities

Written by Alice Pattillo

Our global ancestors have all used seasonal celebrations and folklore in order to deal with their own mortality and fear of the unknown as well as celebrate the deceased. From Mexico's Día de Muertos and China's Hungry Ghost Festival to the German Walpurgis Night and the Hindu festival Pitru Paksha, every continent has their own version, or versions, of a celebration like Halloween; festivals to remember the dead, or simply a time of year when the atmosphere looms heavy with tales of myths and monsters.

In ancient Rome, the nine-day festival of Parentalia occurred in late February (a similar time to the old Irish and modern pagan festival of Beltane), when people would bring sacred offerings, such as wreaths, wine and food, to family tombs in order to honour family ancestors. This was followed by Lemuria, occurring around May Day, when Romans would perform a series of rites, including walking barefoot and tossing black beans over their shoulder at midnight, in order to exorcise unwelcome spirits from their homes. It is believed that Lemuria had an influence on the Catholic church's observance of All Saints Day, despite them moving it from spring to winter during the Middle Ages.

In ancient Persia, there was a belief that at the end of the Persian year (at the vernal equinox in March) the spirits of the dead would return to their homes. In modern day Iran, people still celebrate a fire festival called Chaharshanbe Suri on the eve of the last Wednesday before the vernal equinox, where bonfires and fireworks are lit. Some of the customs practised are similar to those performed in western Halloween, such as spoon-banging (a variation of trick or treating), divination and burning rue seeds to ward off evil spirits.

Meanwhile, across the rest of Europe, there were similar festivals and rites to usher in the Winter season. In Scandinavia, the Winter Nights was a seasonal period beginning in late October, which included various blots – literally translated as 'blood sacrifices' – festivals of sacrificial slaughter of livestock, feasts and rites in honour of the gods. Blots held during the Winter Nights were likely in aid of a good harvest, fertility, and ancestral reverence, with specific blots to honour Freyr (god of fertility and good harvest), the elves (who are often associated with the ancestors) and the female spirits, the Dísir. For the Anglo-Saxons, November was the month of sacrifice, referring to the culling of livestock at the beginning of winter and the harvest season.

While Samhain might have been credited as the most important pre-Christian influence on Halloween, numerous similar customs and festivals held at harvest season and during winter existed across pagan Europe. With the dark nights drawing in, it is no surprise that Europeans felt particularly spooked at the dawn of winter.

In Wales, Halloween is known as Nos Calan Gaeaf, a spirit night where the dead are abroad and the veil between this world and the Welsh Celtic otherworld, Annwn, is at its thinnest. Hwch Ddu Gwta, the tailless black sow, was said to catch the last child to make it home from the annual village bonfire, and men would don a pig skin and terrify the poor kids. Tales of a ghostly apparition of Y Ladi Wen or the white lady have haunted the landscapes for centuries, and are said to have their origins in Celtic mythology. In North Wales, an ancient yew tree located in a graveyard is said to be possessed by a spirit who recites the names of parishioners who will die within the coming year. Similarly, it was said that if you ran around the local church three times, and then peeked through the keyhole at midnight, you would see the faces of the people who'd die over the next year. Dressing up as witches and parading door to door, stones left by the fire to predict deaths, and other traditional Halloween divination customs were also common.

In nearby Somerset, there was a bizarre version of Hallloween trick-or-treating, dubbed Punkie Night and held on the last Thursday of October. Children would march around with Jack O'Lanterns carved from swedes or mangel-wurzels reciting a poem that demanded they receive a candle or a penny or they'll offer a "fright".

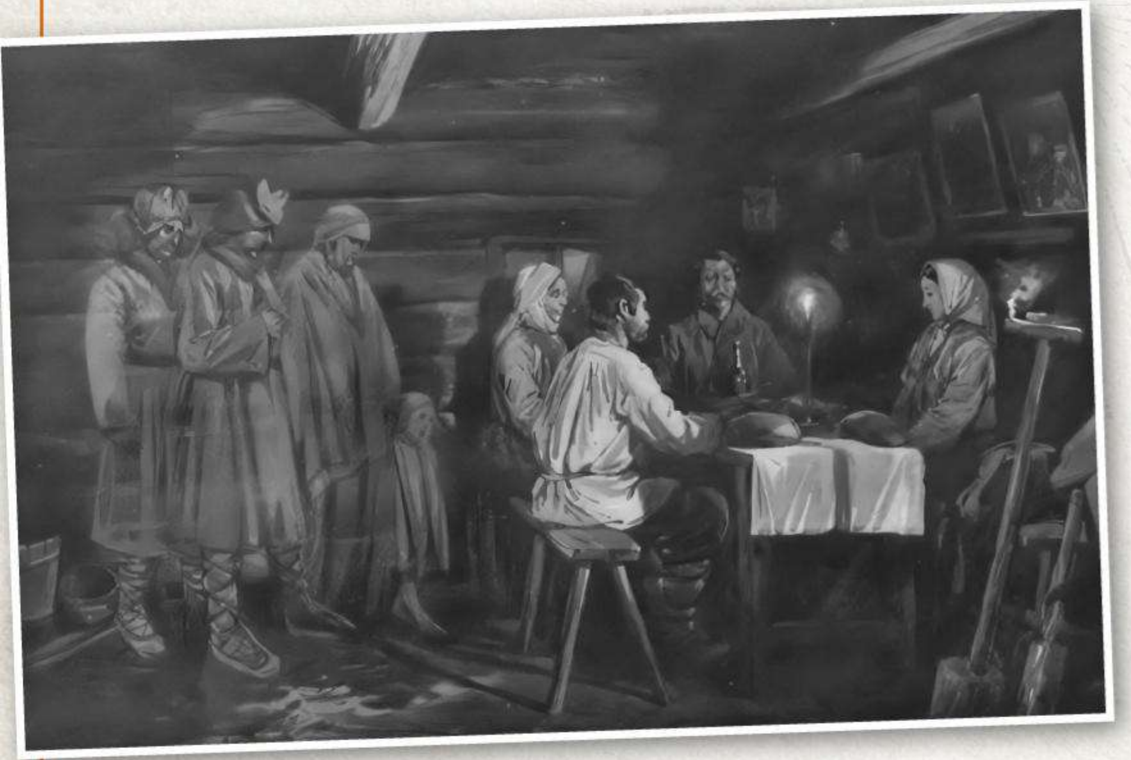
In Slavic countries, 1 November is Dzien Zaduszny, when people visit the graves of their ancestors to decorate them with wreaths and flowers while churches call out the names of the deceased. Legend says that the light of the candles placed upon the graves gives direction to lost and unfortunate souls who wander between Heaven and Earth. This is one of two Dziady, or Forefathers', days, the other of which falls on May Day, when people perform pre-Christian rites, rituals and customs in honour of the spirits of their ancestors, including leaving them food, and saunas. In Bulgaria, the last weekend of January sees Kukeri, a centuries old Thracian tradition in which people dress up in monster costumes designed to frighten away bad spirits and a two day parade is held in the capital of Sofia.

In Italy and Sicily, people bake ossa di morto, a type of cookie that is shaped like bones, and put it in the shoes of those departed on All Saint's Day. Similarly, in Malta, it is common to pick up a bone-shaped pastry covered with white icing around the 1 November.

While the Irish Samhain and medieval Hallowtide have perpetuated the idea that when winter is nigh, veils between worlds are thinner and connection to the dead and supernatural is possible, this was not the only time of year that such beliefs and superstitions held sway Europe. In fact, in Ireland, it was both Samhain and the spring festival of Beltane that were believed to have an increase in supernatural activity. Historically, many other countries felt the seasonal shift at spring was the preferred time to honour the dead, likely due to the number of deaths that had occurred throughout the winter. By spring, people would be in need of closure and rituals to aid in the mourning process.

St Mark's Eve (observed on 24 April, the day before the feast of St Mark) had similar associations to Halloween during the 17th to 19th centuries in England. It was customary to sit on the porch of a church in silence while the bell tolled from 11pm to 1am in the morning, when the ghosts of those who were fated to die in the next year were thought to appear passing into the church. It was also possible for a woman to see the face of her future husband on this night, if she held her dress to the fire. Similarly, on 20 January, St Agnes' Eve, unmarried women would perform a variety of rituals in order to dream of their future husbands, just like those that would become associated with Halloween. On St John's Eve, the evening prior to the Midsummer Feast of St John on 24 June, it was tradition to build large bonfires (a custom that continues to this day in many countries) in order to repel witches and evil spirits. In Sweden, Midsommar is held around this time, and is the nation's second biggest holiday (behind Christmas). On Midsommar's Eve, young girls are encouraged to pick flowers and leave them under their pillow while they sleep in order to dream of their future husband – a practice also seen at Halloween with apples and nuts. Also in Sweden (and Finland), there is a springtime ritual of children dressing up as witches and going door-to-door in a similar fashion to trick-or-treating. This tradition is thanks to an old Swedish legend of witches flying on their broomsticks to meet with the Devil at the mythical island of Blockula on the Thursday before Easter Sunday. In German folklore, Walpurgis Night (Saint Walpurga's Eve)

"People visit the graves of their ancestors to decorate them with wreaths and flowers"



Paper money is burned during the Hungry Ghost Festival in China, with the belief that the money will enrich the spirits of the dead in the afterlife

on May Day Eve, is the night that witches meet on the Brocken mountain peak for their sabbat and to see in the spring – a night referred to as Hexennacht (Witches' Night). Saint Walpurgis herself had a knack for fending off witchcraft, and fires are burned across Europe to ward off evil spirits on the night before her feast day. In Russia, the second Tuesday of Easter is known as Radonitsa, day of rejoicing. People eat and drink in cemeteries upon the graves of their passed away loved ones, and celebrate the life of the dead. In Nigeria, the whole month of April is the Awuru Odo Festival, where people dress in masks to mimic the spirits of the dead as a sign of reverence, and perform rituals, sacrifices, parades and prepare food offerings.

The Hungry Ghost festival is celebrated in the religions of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month, usually falling from mid-August to mid-September. During this time, the gates to the underworld are opened and ghosts return to the earth and seek communication with their relatives, and people prepare food offerings and provide entertainment for them. Spirits who have no families are said to be malevolent upon their return, and joss papers are burned in the hope that smoke will help drive them away. Lotus lanterns are lit and set afloat to guide the spirits back to the underworld; when the candle goes out, it is believed that the spirit has found their way back.

Pitru Paksha is another festival in which respect is paid to dead ancestors. A 16-day lunar period in the Hindu calendar, occuring in September, Pirtu Paksha is when the souls of three preceding generations leave Pitriloka, a realm between Heaven and Earth where the souls of the dead reside before being reborn. The autumnal equinox often occurs during Pitru Paksha, and the moment when the Sun transits from the north to the south celestial sphere is considered a sacred time and begins a day of the ancestors. The rites of Shraddha are performed at this time in homage to the ancestors and food offerings are made of kheer, lapsi, rice, dal, spring beans and pumpkin. In Nepal, Hindus celebrate Gai Jatra, the festival of cows, in August or September. Cows are sacred in Hinduism and bring good fortune to those in Heaven, so they parade them on the streets and distribute food in order to commemorate the dead.

Día de Muertos

While the modern Halloween tradition is an American export largely influenced by the Irish Samhain, shaped through the centuries, it is constantly changing and adapting, adopting aspects of other festivals of the dead from all over the world. One festival in particular that Halloween has adopted, at least in a aesthetic sense, is the Southern American Día de Muertos (or Day of the Dead). Originating in Mexico, Día de Muertos was said to have formed in a similar fashion to Halloween – merging the traditions of the native people of Mexico with the Catholic doctrine of the invading Spanish. The colourful festival falls on the same day as the Catholic All Soul's Day, 2 November. People build private altars to their loved ones containing their favourite food, photographs and various other sacred items, Aztec marigold flowers, and calaveras (representations of the human skull, usually in edible form). A type of bread called Pan de Muerto is baked, colourful sugar skulls decorated to represent the vitality of those departed are given out to friends and costumed children knock on doors for calaverita (small gift of money or candy) – a variation of trick-or-treating. Despite the use of skulls and bones as imagery, the festival is about the celebration of life, differentiating it from the spooky feel of Halloween. The holiday is now celebrated across much of South and Central America and in many areas of the USA.

Candles are often lit in prayers for the dead during the days of Hallowtide

The Season of Hallowtide

Hallowtide, a time of year when the dead have access to the world of the living, is an ancient tradition that millions still celebrate

Written by Ben Gazur

Hallowtide may not be a familiar concept to many in the modern world, yet everyone will have heard of at least part of it. The season of Hallowtide covers All Saints Eve, All Saints Day, and All Souls Day and has been known throughout the centuries as Allhallowtide, Hallowmas, and Allsaintstide. While none of these may be household names it is almost certain you know the alternative name of All Saints Eve – Halloween.

Together these three days formed a triduum – a three-day period – of celebration in the early church. The story of how these three days were chosen, what they came to represent, and how they are celebrated today is one that takes us back before Christianity was even born.

The celebration of saints and martyrs was one of the earliest traditions in Christianity. The Book of Acts records how after St Stephen was stoned to death by a mob his body was reverently carried away by his followers and buried. Texts which described the lives, and crucially the deaths, of the saints were widely copied and spread between communities. During the periods of persecution that the early Christians suffered under the Roman Empire, the number of martyrs exploded. While each individual community might celebrate a few of the many saints it was sometimes thought to be useful to commemorate all saints – including those whose sainthood was known only to God.

We have records of a special feast day dedicated to all the saints from at least the 4th century. The actual day of the feast was different in different places. In Edessa it fell on 13 May, while in Antioch it was the first Sunday after Pentecost. Maximus of Tours in the 5th century delivered sermons in honour of all saints on that Sunday after Pentecost too. He explained that preserving the memory of the saints, all of them, refreshed the faith of the living. “Even if the holy martyrs are silent, they teach us by the power of what they have done; even if they do not speak, they persuade by the suffering of their martyrdom.” By praying to the saints and remembering their suffering, the faithful of the Catholic church hoped for their intercession with God.

In the 7th century Pope Boniface IV dedicated the pagan Pantheon in Rome as the Christian church of St Mary and All Martyrs on 13 May. With this consecration he started the annual celebration of the saints in Rome on that date. Some have suggested that 13 May was chosen because it was also the date of the pagan festival of Lemuria.

Lemuria was the day when Romans placated the spirits of the dead who might have vengeful intentions towards the living. The poet Ovid suggests that the festival was started by Romulus to calm the spirit of Remus, the brother Romulus had killed. During the Lemuria the head of a household would walk backwards, barefoot, while tossing black beans over their shoulder. With loud shouts and clashing of pots the family would then drive out ghosts.

By the 9th century however the celebration of All Saints Day had moved to 1 November, which is the date currently observed. The Venerable Bede records the English holding their All Saints Day on 1 November. Alcuin of Northumbria encouraged the emperor Charlemagne to introduce All Saints Day to the Frankish kingdoms. Interestingly 1 November also marks the Celtic festival of Samhain, which seems to have influenced popular celebrations of the day.

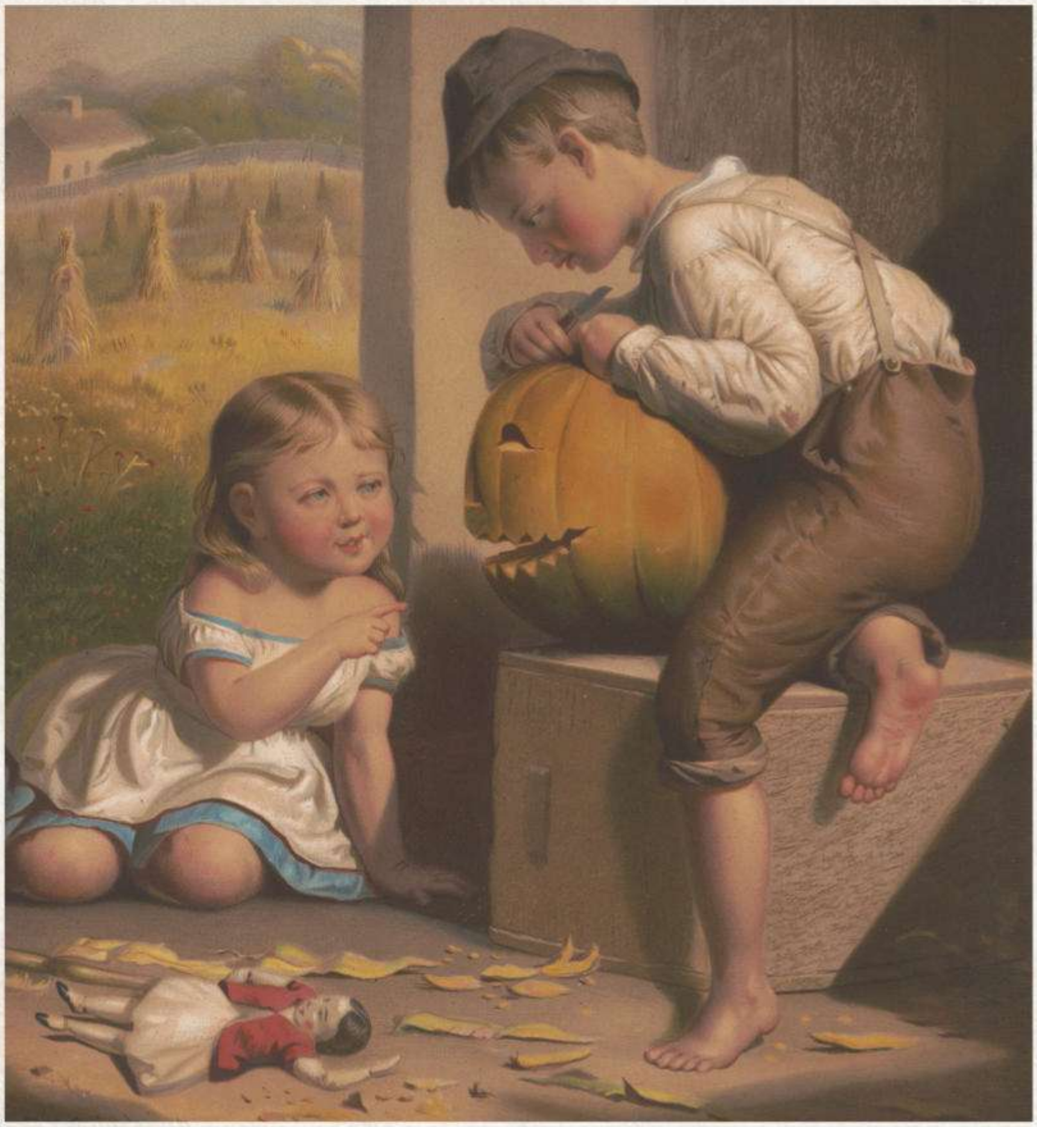
All Saints Day observances are generally distinct from the older Samhain and modern Halloween traditions, however. The focus of most celebrations remains closely tied to the religious and spiritual significance of the day. The Catholic church considers All Saints Day to be a day of obligation. All Catholics who are able should attend mass on All Saints Day.

In the Middle Ages church bells were rung throughout the days of Hallowtide to remind the faithful to keep the memory of saints in their hearts and to call on them to pray for souls in Purgatory. In some places the town crier was charged with walking the streets and calling on the citizens to remember unfortunate souls in their prayers.

The deeply religious nature of All Saints Day underlined a shocking event which occurred in 1755. On 1 November a devastating earthquake struck the city of Lisbon in Portugal. Many buildings were tumbled to the ground. The many candles lit to celebrate All Saints Day contributed to destructive fires that swept through the ruins. Then tsunamis broke over Lisbon, adding to the destruction. Up to 50,000 people are thought to have died. That such a disaster could occur on such an important feast day shocked Europe. The author Voltaire included the earthquake in his work *Candide* to prove that we do not live in the 'best of all possible worlds' in the care of a benevolent deity.

In France 1 November is known as La Toussaint, which is an abbreviation of the phrase 'tous les saints' - 'all the saints.' On La Toussaint families will visit and clean the graves of those they have lost, and leave flowers, often chrysanthemums, for them. Similar customs are followed in other European nations.

In Mexico, All Saints Day coincides with the Day of the Dead. Here solemn mourning for the dead is replaced with a more joyous celebration of those who have died. Altars that memorialise dead friends and family are constructed in the house and offerings of food and drink are given in their honour. Colourful skulls, called calaveras, remind people of their own mortality and of those who have already died.



Anglophone nations however have for the most part moved the focus of Hallowtide away from All Saints Day and instead celebrate in ghoulish fashion the night before.

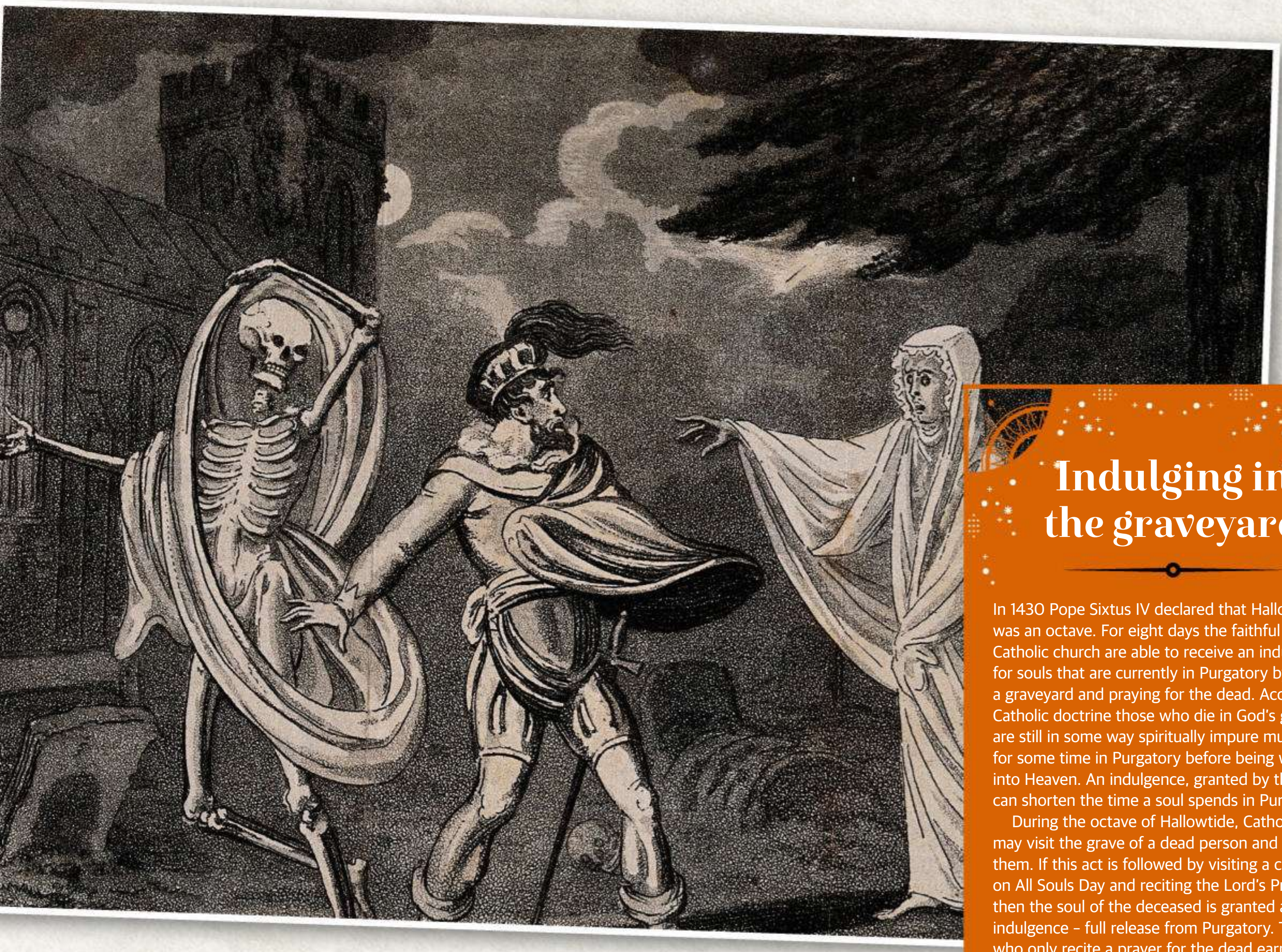
The day before All Saints Day is probably the most familiar part of Hallowtide in the English speaking world, though they may not recognise it. The name Halloween derives from the name All Hallows Eve, with 'hallows' being an old word for saints. Halloween is therefore simply the day before All Saints Day - but it has grown from disparate traditions and evolved into its own separate festival over the centuries.

Samhain is the Celtic celebration that marks the end of summer yet there are hints that it may even predate the Celts. A tomb on the Hill of Tara in Ireland is aligned with the sunrise on the morning of Samhain and was built at least 2,000 years before the arrival of the Celts in the area. What we know of Samhain links it closely to the current celebration of Halloween.

Samhain was marked with bonfires and commemoration of the dead. The end of October is a liminal point in the year when summer comes to an end and the shorter days of winter are fast approaching. That the barriers between the realms of the living and the dead were thinnest at this point of the year seems to have been a widespread belief. Texts talk of the feasts that were held in honour of the dead and the bonfires lit to drive away evil spirits that may have breached the walls around the world of the living. Offerings were often left outside the home to appease any creature or ghost that might have malice towards the living.

Of course a feast and celebration focussed around a bonfire also offered a unifying moment for a community that would soon face the rigours of the winter. It was common for homes to extinguish the fires in their hearths and relight them using flames from the communal fire, tying the community together.

While many of the feasting and fire aspects of Samhain have been retained in Halloween it is also shaped by Christian theology. The Venerable Bede, writing in the 8th century, records a letter from Pope Gregory the Great in 601CE that explained how native British religion was co-opted by Christianity. Gregory explained to those attempting to convert the British that old pagan temples should be retained wherever possible but have their idols removed and replaced with Christian symbols to ease the transition. The same went for exchanging the meanings of festivals. "Because they are used to slaughter



many oxen in sacrifice to devils, some solemnity must be given them in exchange for this, as that on the day of the dedication, or the nativities of the holy martyrs, whose relics are there deposited, they should build themselves huts of the boughs of trees about those churches which have been turned to that use from being temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasting, and no more offer animals to the Devil, but kill cattle and glorify God in their feast.”

Whether older Samhain traditions were explicitly transferred to Halloween by design is debatable but it seems obvious that they survived in folk memories. Echoes of the bonfires of Samhain are found in the candles that are ubiquitous in pumpkins on Halloween. The feasting of Samhain has been exchanged for the glut of sweets that trick-or-treaters receive as they go from door to door.

Samhain and All Saints Eve retained their ritual significance even as Christianity was spread over older traditions. The thinning of the barriers between the living and the dead on this date made it an ideal time for communication between the two. Predicting the future using various types of divination was thought to be especially effective on All Saints Eve.

These rituals ranged from Dumb Suppers, where girls could call up spectres of their future husbands, to Dumb Cakes that offered dreams of a future lover. Other methods of predicting a the future of a marriage involved dropping a pair of objects, perhaps nuts, in water. If only one floated there would be no marriage, if both floated the pair would be a miserable couple, and if both sank then a happy matrimony was on the cards.

Other rituals were performed to predict not love but death. In one a blindfolded person was placed beside saucers containing water, salt, and earth. The person then placed a hand in one of the saucers and what they grabbed determined their future. Water predicted a long voyage and salt equalled wealth but to pick up a handful of earth betokened your own funeral.

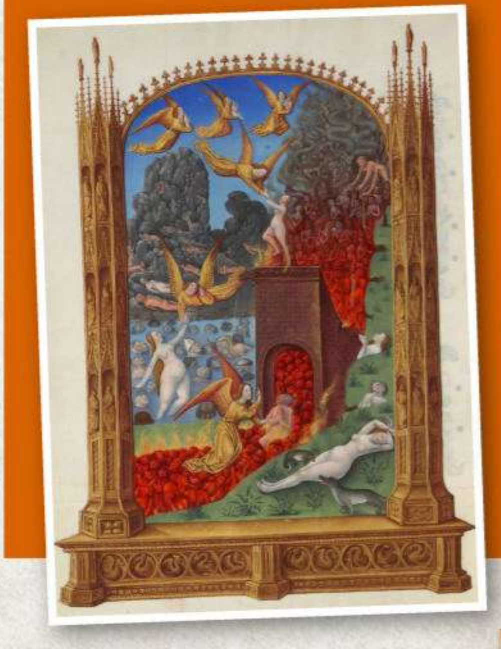
There is one type of Halloween divination that is still widely practised today though many may not know its history. Apple-bobbing is a simple party game today but it once had a magical aspect. In some versions of the game it was the first person who could grab an apple with their mouth

Indulging in the graveyard

In 1430 Pope Sixtus IV declared that Hallowtide was an octave. For eight days the faithful of the Catholic church are able to receive an indulgence for souls that are currently in Purgatory by visiting a graveyard and praying for the dead. According to Catholic doctrine those who die in God’s grace but are still in some way spiritually impure must suffer for some time in Purgatory before being welcomed into Heaven. An indulgence, granted by the church, can shorten the time a soul spends in Purgatory.

During the octave of Hallowtide, Catholics may visit the grave of a dead person and pray for them. If this act is followed by visiting a church on All Souls Day and reciting the Lord’s Prayer then the soul of the deceased is granted a plenary indulgence – full release from Purgatory. Those who only recite a prayer for the dead earn the soul a partial indulgence, which cuts the time they will spend in Purgatory.

This tradition still stands today and many families visit the graves of their loved ones to ease their passage into Heaven. During the COVID pandemic the Pope extended the period in which indulgences could be given to cover the whole month of November, to allow more people to visit churchyards in safety.



Soul cakes were traditionally given to visitors on All Souls Day in return for prayers for the dead

Relics or spooky skeletons?

Today it is very unlikely that you will see a dead body as you go about your business. Historically however people have been a lot less squeamish about death. A visit to a church or cathedral would have given people plenty of up-close views of death.

Cadaver tombs in English churches were sculpted to show both the dead person as they were in life and the corpse they were decaying into. A shrine to a saint might contain the body, or part thereof, of a saint. The faithful could come face to face with the grinning skulls of God's anointed. Even without the physical remains of a saint a church could show the gory results of a martyrdom in images. Whether it is St Bartholomew holding his own flayed skin or St Lawrence roasted to death these scenes would have made quite the impression.

The horrible costumes and decorations of Halloween can be seen as a continuation of these images. Even shambling zombies can be linked to the preserved bodies of the saints, which were often rendered in life-like poses. The images of inferno that decorated churches are populated by demons, devils, and ghouls that would not look out of place on a trick or treat.

The bodies of saints were thought to be spiritually potent and so were often displayed to the faithful

> "According to tradition the celebration of All Souls Day came about after a pilgrim's vision"

who would be the next to marry. Others said that by placing the apple you picked out under your pillow you would be granted a vision of your future spouse.

While the Catholic church used All Saints Day to pray to the saints for aid, All Souls Day sees worshippers pray for the souls of all who have died in hopes of freeing those who are currently in Purgatory. According to tradition the celebration of All Souls Day came about after a vision.

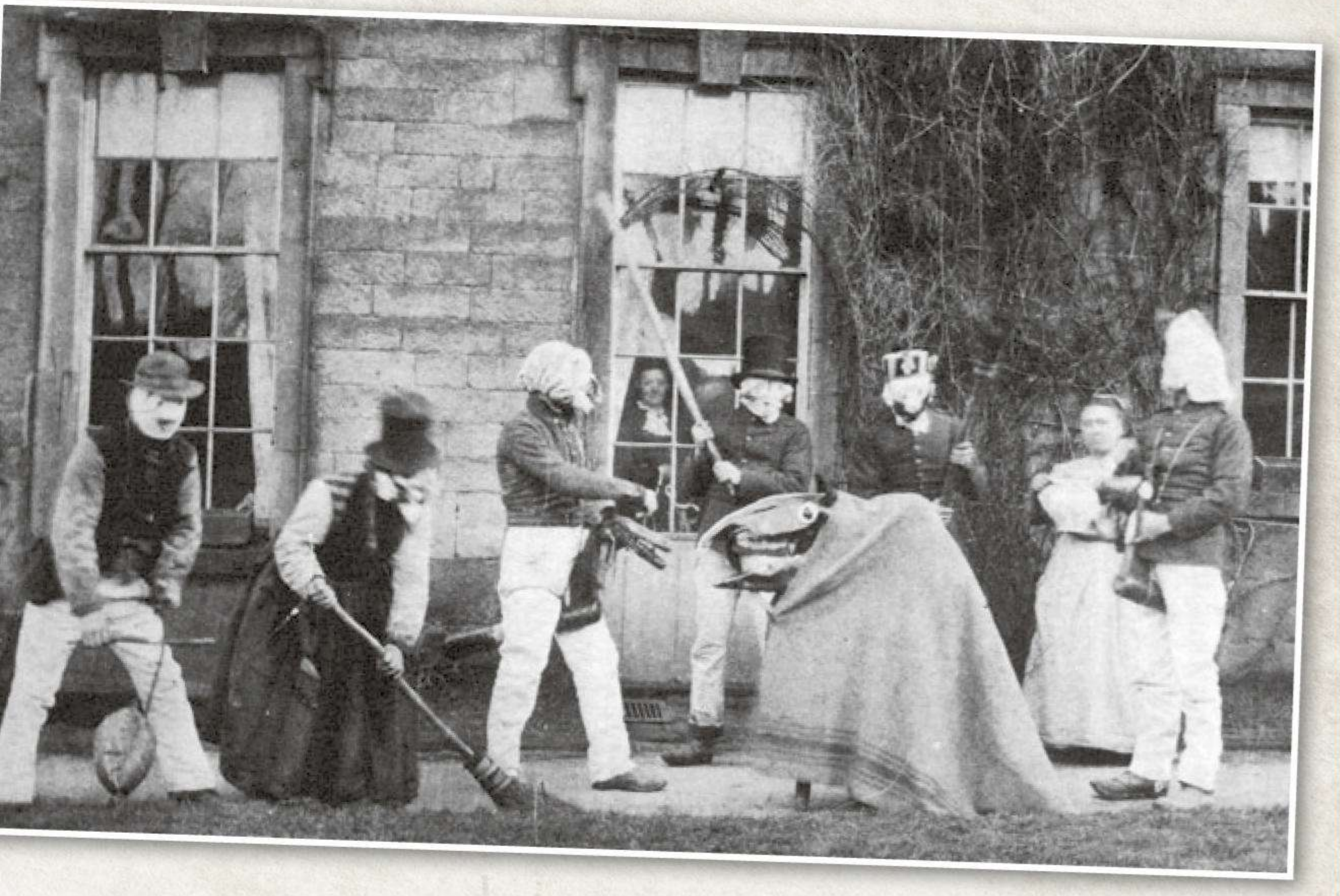
A pilgrim was travelling to the Holy Land when a massive storm blew up and shipwrecked him on a rocky island. Among the crags and cliffs the pilgrim discovered a hermit. The hermit gave the pilgrim a message from the afterlife. In his years alone on the island the hermit had been granted visions in the cracks of the cliffs. There he saw flames licking out of the rock and heard the groans of tormented people. Among the screams of those who were in Purgatory the hermit also heard the grumblings of demons.

According to the hermit, the demons complained loudly about how effective prayers for the dead were. In particular they hated the monks of the abbey at Cluny because their prayers were regularly freeing souls from Purgatory. The hermit gave the pilgrim a message to carry to Cluny – they must redouble their prayers.

The pilgrim carried the message to Odilo, abbot of Cluny. Odilo instituted a special day on which the souls of those in Purgatory could be prayed for and decreed that it would be held annually on the day after All Saints Day. The tradition spread across the entire western church and indulgences for souls in purgatory can still be gained today through prayer in a churchyard.

The tradition of praying for the souls of the dead developed into the tradition of Souling. During the period of Hallowtide groups of people, often young children, would travel from door to door in hopes of getting a sweet treat. These were holy beggars, because they would often sing a song that detailed the deal on offer. In exchange for a biscuit, a cake, or a sweet the Soulers promised to offer up prayers for the good of the dead.

In medieval England soul cakes were the typical gift given to Soulers. These cakes are actually a type of spiced biscuit containing dried fruit and marked with a cross on top. The cross reminds soulers of the bargain that has been struck between them and the giver. In some parts of England large numbers of soul cakes were baked



and piled high on a plate by the door ready for any Soulers who might stop at the door. There are many variations of the songs sung by Soulers but perhaps the most popular runs as follows:

"A soul! a soul! a soul-cake!
Please good Missis, a soul-cake!
An apple, a pear, a plum,
or a cherry,
Any good thing to make us
all merry.
One for Peter, two for Paul
Three for Him who made
us all.

God bless the master of
this house,
The misteress also,
And all the little children
That round your table grow.
Likewise young men and maidens,
Your cattle and your store;
And all that dwells within your gates,
We wish you ten times more."

Soul cakes are known by several names including soul-mass cakes and somas loaves. In some places the cakes are round while in others they were always triangular, perhaps to signify the Holy Trinity. As well as being good to eat the cakes could also be preserved as a lucky charm. One was reportedly kept for over a hundred years.

In the 19th century the procession of Soulers sometimes included costumes and lanterns made from carved root vegetables. The similarity to modern Halloween trick-or-treaters is obvious. The costumes could be decidedly sinister. Some Soulers travelled with a Hob – a decorated horse head which poked out of a sheet covering the person controlling it. Sometimes a horse's skull was used for extra (spooky) effect.

All Souls Day was not just a time for food and festivity; it was also a time when the dead were able to interact most easily with the living. In the medieval period it was thought that spirits could take on the form of hideous monsters, witches, and loathsome animals to torment those who had wronged them in life. Of course not all souls wished to punish the living – some wanted to reunite with them. One way of guiding the spirits of lost loved ones back into the home was to light candles and show them in the window to help them find their way.

In some traditions, supper is left on the table for wandering souls to partake of on Halloween night

In some places the living would go to the dead. In Italy it is common to celebrate All Souls Day with a meal that is for both the living and the deceased. The family sit down to eat with a place specially set for those who have died. In some places the table is not cleaned after the meal so that any lost soul may sit down to a feast during the night. If the dead can still not attend then the family may hold a picnic at the graveside of their lost loved one to reunite on that day.

Hallowtide is an ancient tradition that embraces and encompasses a wide range of historical rituals and beliefs ranging from the prehistoric, to the Celtic, to the Christian. Yet at its heart is the message that the dead are not truly as gone as they first seem. Whether participants really believe that ghosts and spirits can return during this time, it serves as a reminder of the importance of those who are no longer living and a way to honour their memory.

38

40

46

50

58

66

THE WITCHES

38 Why Witches Come Out on Halloween

40 Dawn of the Witch

46 The Ghoul Next Door

50 15 Most Notorious Witches

58 James VI and the Witches

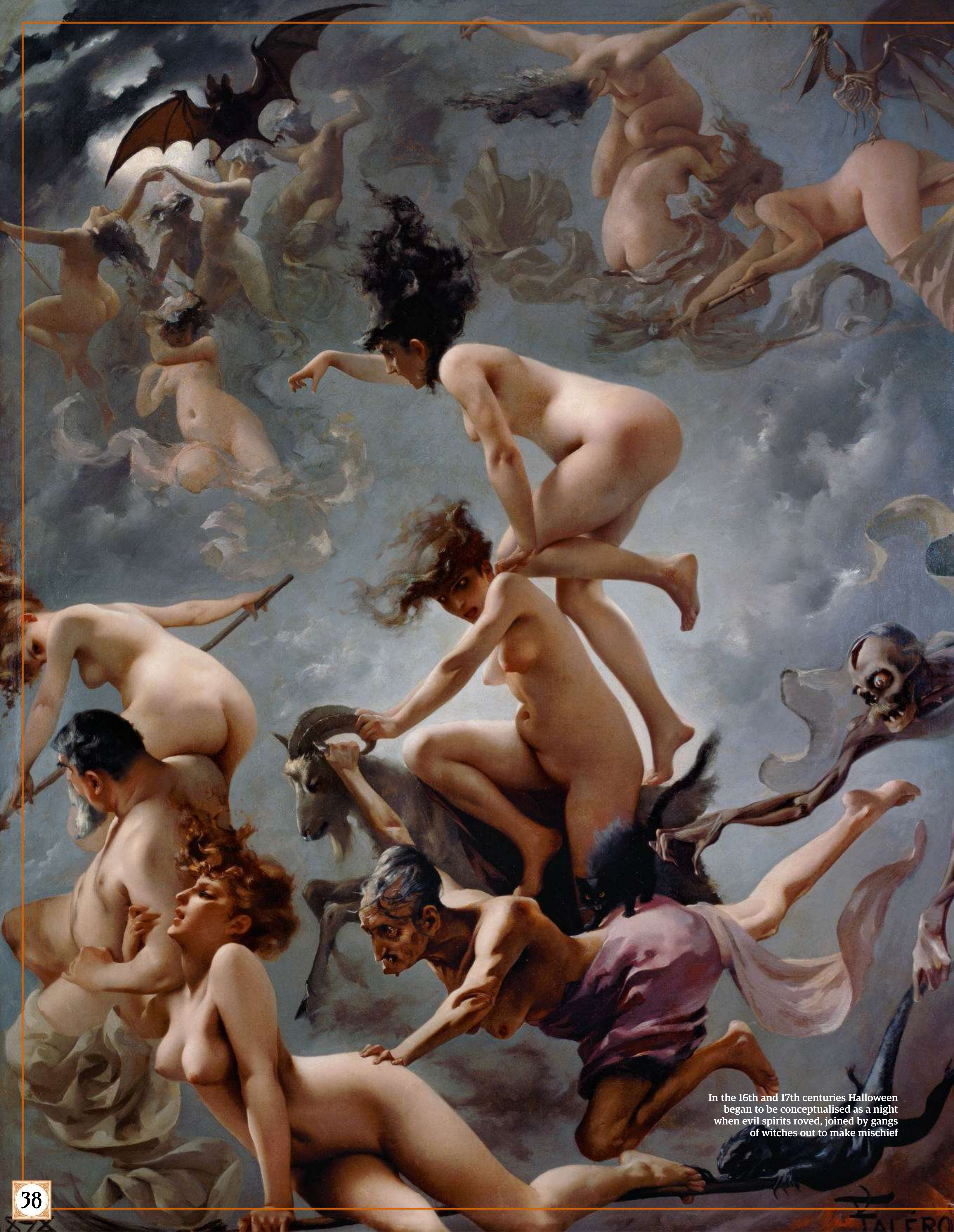
66 Witch Hunting

72 Terror on Pendle Hill

78 The Witches Spellbook

82 Magic in the Age of Enlightenment

88 Gardener's Genesis of Wicca



In the 16th and 17th centuries Halloween began to be conceptualised as a night when evil spirits roved, joined by gangs of witches out to make mischief

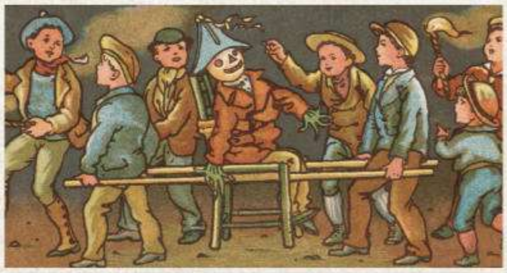
Why Witches Come Out on Halloween

The ancient festivals honouring the dearly departed weren't always the province of witches – so how and why did they first come to be associated with Halloween?

Written by April Madden

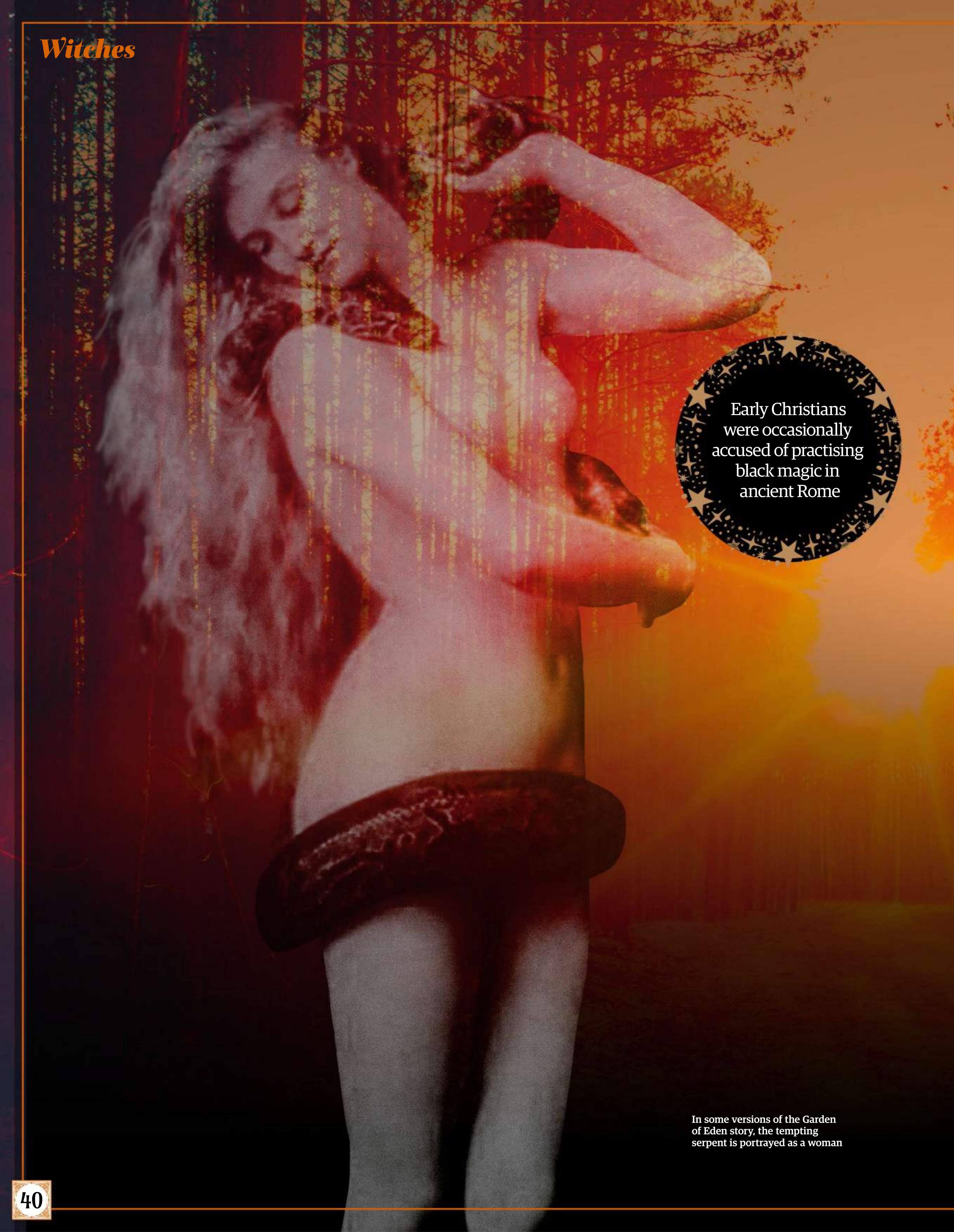
While the ancient festivals of pre-Christian Europe focused on the dead and the otherworldly, these were not necessarily seen as evil – many were viewed as welcome ancestral and tutelary spirits rather than revenants and ghouls. Premodern Roman Catholicism took a somewhat similar view, celebrating first the dead saints on 1 November and all departed souls the day after, and prayers were offered in the hope of helping one's beloved dead leave the limbo of Purgatory and ascend into Heaven. The point of a funeral rite was to 'speed' the dead to Paradise; All Souls' therefore also functioned as a catch-all for any unfortunates – soldiers, travellers, plague victims, those lost at sea and so on – who had not received proper burial.

During the Reformation, Protestant theology eschewed the concept of Purgatory entirely. The idea of a middle ground between Heaven and Hell, in which the prayers of the living could speed the dead to a state of grace, was incompatible with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which holds that God has a plan for every soul and no amount of intercession can change it. As early as the late Elizabethan era Protestants were dismissing Hallowtide prayers as popish superstition, but as the Reformation went on and the stringent fundamentalism of the Puritans began to develop, this dim view became positively black. Souls, according to puritanical thought, were either in Heaven or Hell according to God's plan, therefore any wandering ghost or unsped spirit abroad on All Hallow's Eve was not a lost or returning soul but a creature of evil. And where there was evil, in Puritan thought, there were witches.



Witches, those (mostly women) suspected of uncanny powers, blasphemous beliefs and transgressive behaviours, must therefore be out in force on Halloween, trafficking with their wicked cohorts and causing trouble for ordinary god-fearing folk. In Britain, Guy Fawkes' and his co-conspirators' ill-fated attempt to assassinate King James VI and I on 5 November 1605 was in some ways a boon to the fearful, witch-obsessed Stuart king, as it allowed him to graft the popular fire festival elements of Halloween onto a patriotic new commemoration in which the failed plot's ringleader was burned in effigy.

By the end of the century, folk traditions on Halloween focused more on protecting homes and livestock from the evil eye of witches out on the prowl than on celebrating the end of the harvest. Good, godly folk now enjoyed the fun aspects of Halloween five days later on Bonfire Night, or Gunpowder Treason Day as it was initially called. Those who kept to the old ways, however, might soon find themselves facing the same fate as the unfortunate Fawkes...



Early Christians were occasionally accused of practising black magic in ancient Rome

In some versions of the Garden of Eden story, the tempting serpent is portrayed as a woman

The Dawn of the Witch

In the ancient world magic was a part of everyday life, but as cultures grew and new religions emerged, the idea of witchcraft and those who practised it became twisted and demonic

Written by Frances White

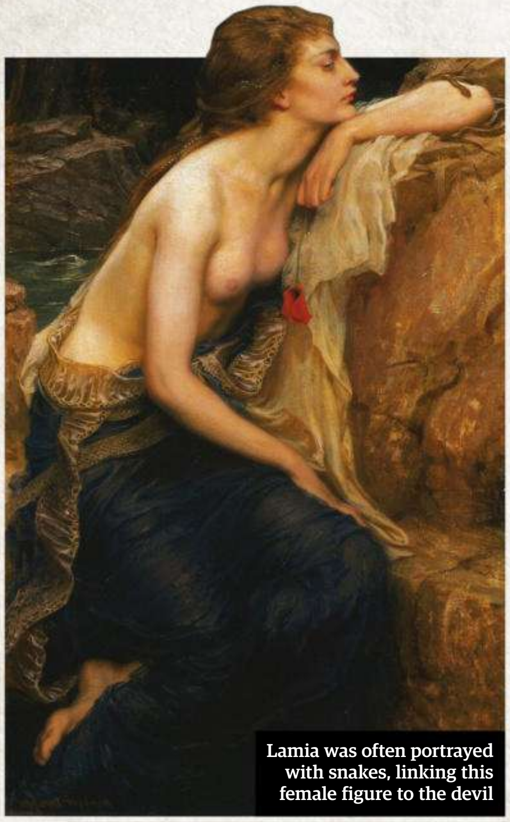
Nearly every culture across the modern world recognises the concept of a witch. Though variations occur, more often than not the witch represents something dark and sinister; something to be feared. Compared to the innocent maiden, clothed in white, the witch is old, ugly, bent double before a cauldron as she brews trouble and strife for unsuspecting victims. The witch is the dark side of femininity, an unhinged, evil presence with great power at her disposal. The witch is a woman who cannot be controlled.

This image has not always been common: it is one, like the witch's potion itself, that has been brewed and tempered over years of mythology, religion and persecution. The earliest versions of witches couldn't be more different from this sinister image – witches were healers and bastions of society. In early Middle Eastern societies, for example, female deities were worshipped, and the holiest of rituals surrounding them were performed by women trained for precisely that purpose. These early examples of witches were known as wise women and were seen as crucial to society. They would stand beside kings, armies would come to them for sacred rituals, and expectant mothers relied on them to deliver babies. But how did this figure, so adored and revered in early society, transform into the spectre of evil and misdeeds that we recognise today?

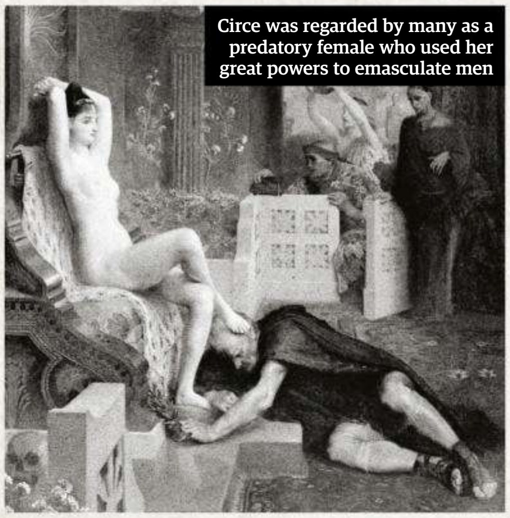
There are many different arguments as to how this transformation took place. One explanation claims that when the Indo-Europeans expanded westward their male-dominated culture, which focused on the power of warriors, war and fierce male gods, overtook the gentler, passive female deities that had previously ruled. Although our actual knowledge of the Indo-Europeans is not extensive, there is evidence that the social perception of magic, and the females who practised it, changed upon the development of male-dominated societies and religions.

The most concrete way to look at how witches came to be regarded is by examining figures of myth. These mystical women able to conduct magic became a common archetype in many myths of the ancient world. A prime example of this dangerous 'bewitching' woman is Lilith. A figure from Jewish mythology, Lilith was a promiscuous demon of the night

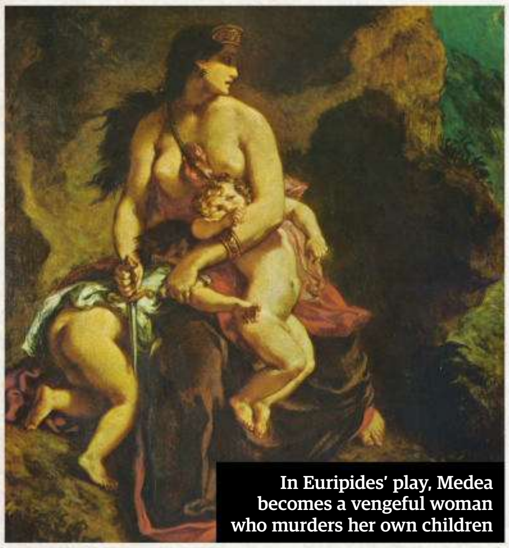
> The idea witches had the ability to turn men into animals was elaborated on by writers, fuelling the Witch Hunt craze



Lamia was often portrayed with snakes, linking this female figure to the devil



Circe was regarded by many as a predatory female who used her great powers to emasculate men



In Euripides' play, Medea becomes a vengeful woman who murders her own children

who kidnaps children. Lilith was also portrayed as leading Adam astray and leaving the Garden of Eden after she refuses to be subservient to him. Lilith was a figure to be feared, a woman with powers who used them to torment. These stories fuelled the male-centric religion, and in the teachings, witchcraft was seen as dangerous and outlawed as a pagan practice. For the Jewish people encountering societies that worshipped female Gods, this distrust was a useful way to establish their own religious dominance.

Greek mythology also features many female figures who practise magic, but their portrayal is not quite as damning. Medea, an ancient Greek heroine, was a sorceress who helped Jason during his quests, providing him with spells, potions and magic. At first Medea ends up happily married to Jason and the two have children together. Medea's role is that of the helper; the provider of magic for the male hero. In this myth, magic is a positive thing; it helps Jason to succeed, and the woman providing it knows her place. It is her duty to help the hero and then marry and have babies with him.

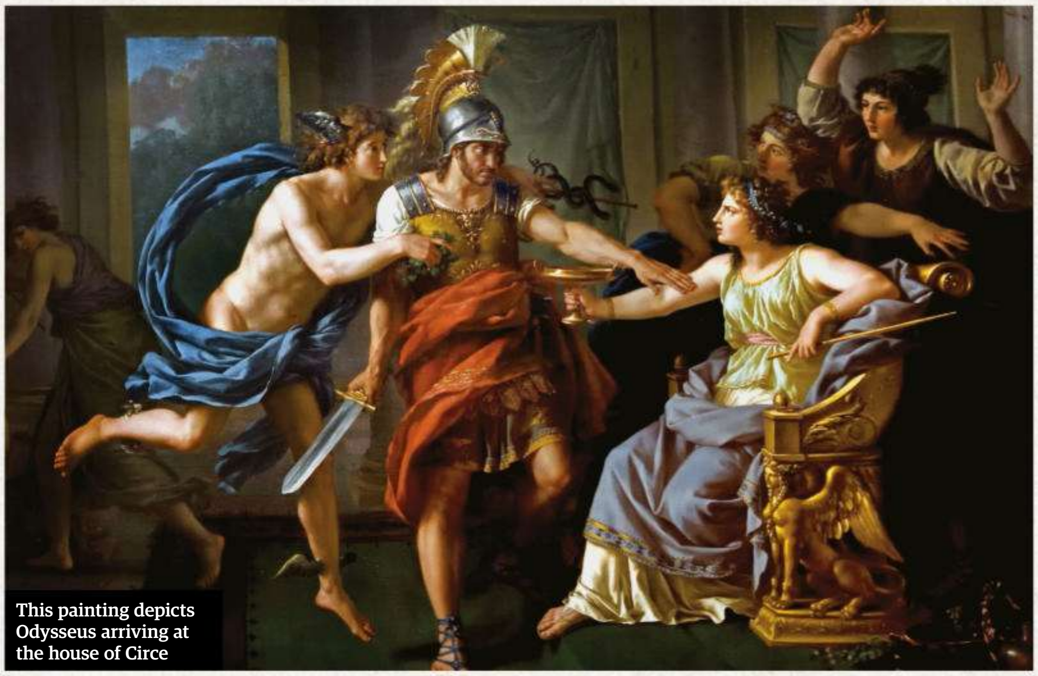
We can see how the Greeks viewed witches differently in the story of Circe. In the *Odyssey*, Circe is portrayed as a dangerous woman who transforms Odysseus' men into pigs. She uses potions, casts magic with a wand and even makes herself invisible. Odysseus uses a magic root given to him by the male god Hermes to defeat her. In the end, the rebellious Circe swears an oath to not use any more magic against the hero, then ends up feeding his entire crew and sleeping with him. The outcome is a happy one: the powerful woman who tried to trick and fool men finally accepts her 'rightful' place as a lover and homemaker.

More damning portrayals of magical women who did not rein in their murderous impulses can also be found. Lamia began as a beautiful queen who turned into a terrifying being that devours the children of others. This unhinged, demonic woman is portrayed in some versions as possessing a serpent's tail below the waist. Lamia became a figure of great fear, one that mothers would use to threaten their children with to encourage good behaviour. It is easy to see how tales of this frightening, demonic woman could have seeped into society and altered the perception of magic and what the women who practised it were capable of.

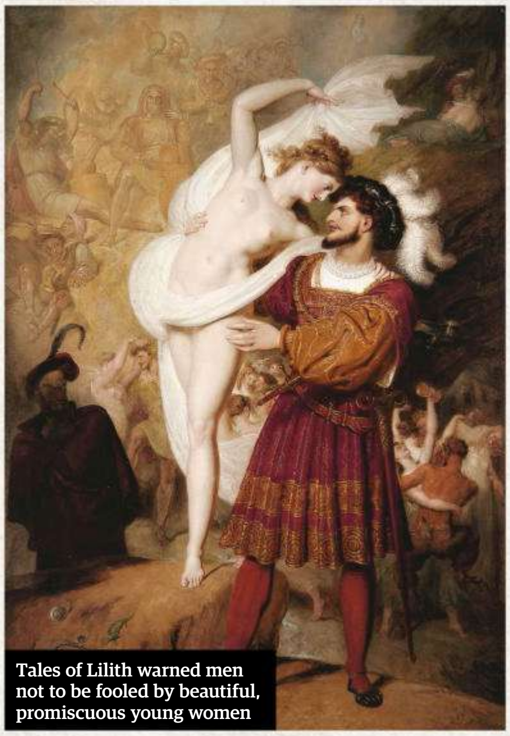
The Greeks themselves were ambivalent about magic. In fact, they had their own form of religious

The Witch of Endor, who appears in the Bible and summons the dead, has caused much debate among theologians

"Mystical women able to conduct magic became common in myths"



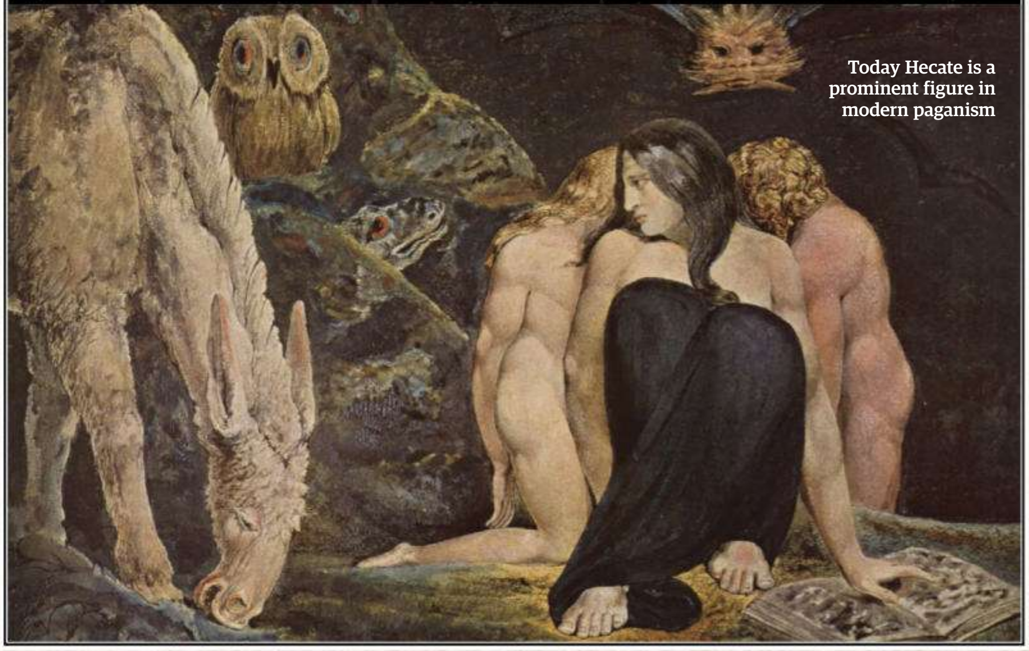
This painting depicts Odysseus arriving at the house of Circe



Tales of Lilith warned men not to be fooled by beautiful, promiscuous young women

Hecate: Goddess of witches

In early Greek mythology Hecate was the goddess of the wilderness and childbirth, but her role developed over time into goddess of sorcery and even queen of ghosts. Hecate is commonly depicted as having three heads to indicate her multifaceted character – moon, earth, underworld and maiden, mother, crone. It was believed that as a goddess of sorcery she could keep out evil spirits, so images of her were placed in doorways and city gates. But this developed the misconception that she could also let evil spirits in if displeased. This led to the belief that she guarded the borders between our world and the spirit world, and Christian perceptions of this powerful witch became altogether more negative. Her association with female dogs and snakes, as well as her ability to transform into a black dog, helped to demonise her further, and fed the notion that witches could transform at will. By the 15th century it was believed that Hecate was revered by witches and her role as goddess of all witches became so ingrained in society that Shakespeare references her in *Macbeth*, as the titular character utters "Witchcraft celebrates pale Hecate's offerings."



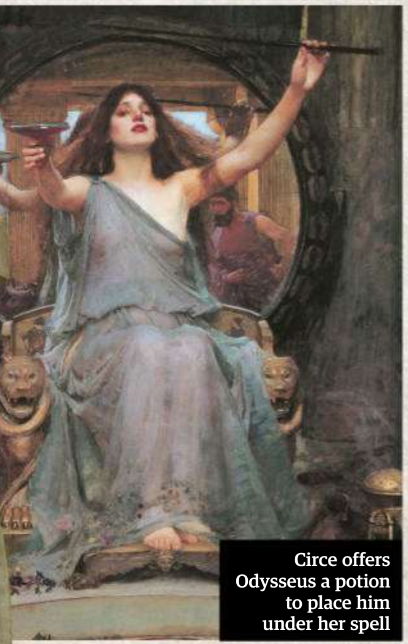
Today Hecate is a prominent figure in modern paganism

magic, surrounding rituals to invoke the power of gods. What they were against, however, were women who did not know their place. There were examples of women receiving the death sentence for distributing bewitching drugs and uttering incantations. The Greeks thoroughly believed in the power of magic, and there were many who were so afraid of it that they campaigned to eradicate magic from society entirely. State-controlled magic, such as rituals for the gods, was seen as acceptable, but magic in the hands of the lower classes, especially poor women, was regarded as dangerous, and those who practised it were seen as being at odds with normal society.

As Roman culture was heavily influenced by Greek myth, these common perceptions of demonic beings and the good, obedient, motherly witch still held great influence. The Romans also openly acknowledged the use of magic. In fact, it became part of the society's state religion, and many believed the use of it was a reason for the empire's success. This religion was controlled by the upper classes and was directly connected to Roman law. When the empire encountered new religions or cults claiming to also possess magical powers, this was seen as sacrilegious and most certainly dangerous to the balance of patriarchal power in Rome. Women may have been unable to defeat men physically, but magic and religion were subtler ways of rebelling, and the Romans, like the Greeks before them, hated nothing more than a powerful woman. Although both men and women were known to practise witchcraft, it was women who bore the brunt of the persecution. Black magic and those who practised it were condemned in Roman law. Anyone who used magic to blight crops or to spread disease was punished severely. It was believed these sorceresses could make poisons, summon the dead, influence

> Lamia was also said to be have been able to remove her eyes, which gave her the gift of prophecy

In some Egyptian -inspired Greek writing, Hecate is said to have the head of a dog, serpent and horse



Circe offers Odysseus a potion to place him under her spell

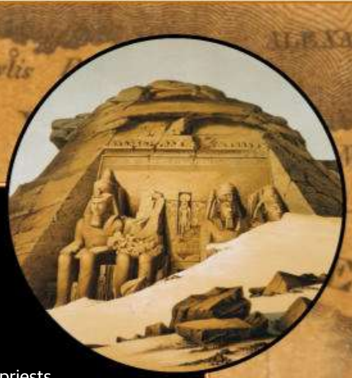
© Corbis, Alamy

Magic in the ancient world

Magic has been present since the earliest human cultures

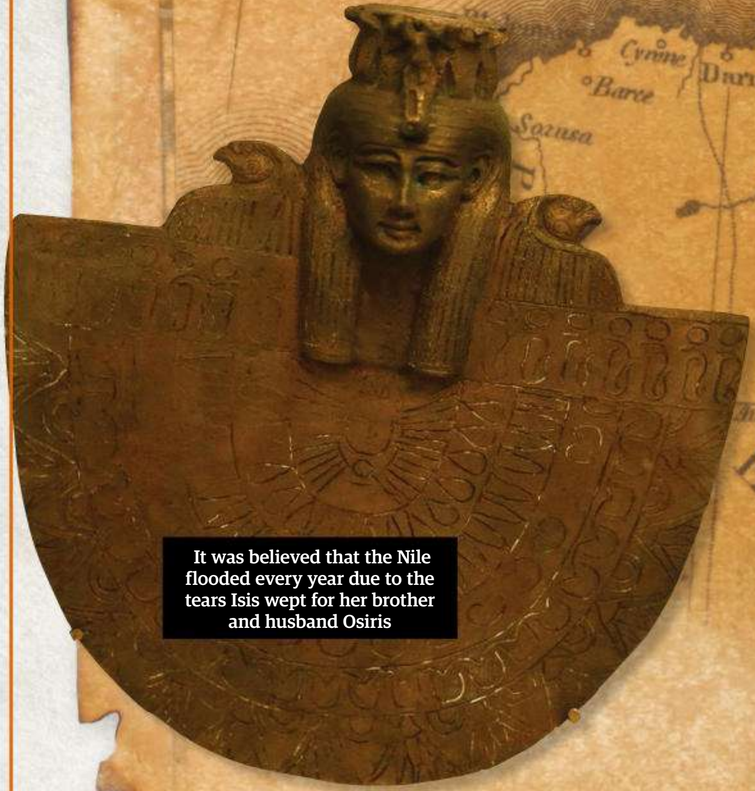
Israel

Although magic was officially condemned in the ancient Jewish world, there are many examples of what we would consider 'magic' today used in ancient Hebrew cultures. Magical recipes and spells have been found, and there were instances of exorcisms of demons, a wide array of amulets, incantation bowls and also medical magic used. Although some Jewish leadership condemned this, most didn't condemn it at all, and others even adopted it themselves.

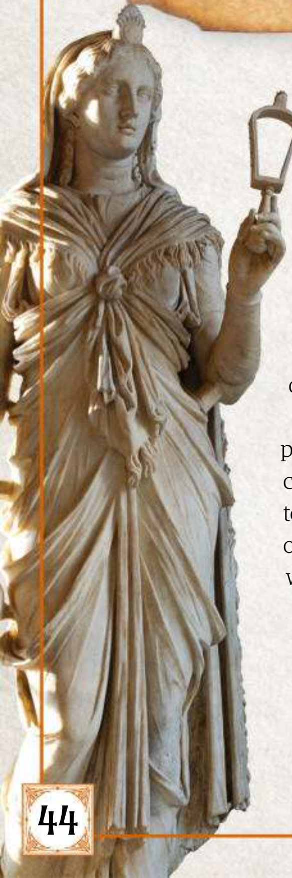


Egypt

From conception to death, belief in magic underpinned all aspects of life in ancient Egypt. Amulets, rituals and magic images were used in everyday life, and magician priests invoked the power of the god of magic, Heka, to greater ends. Magic and medicine went hand in hand, with a medical practitioner working alongside a magical one, and gods were summoned to deal with diseases deemed 'supernatural'.



It was believed that the Nile flooded every year due to the tears Isis wept for her brother and husband Osiris

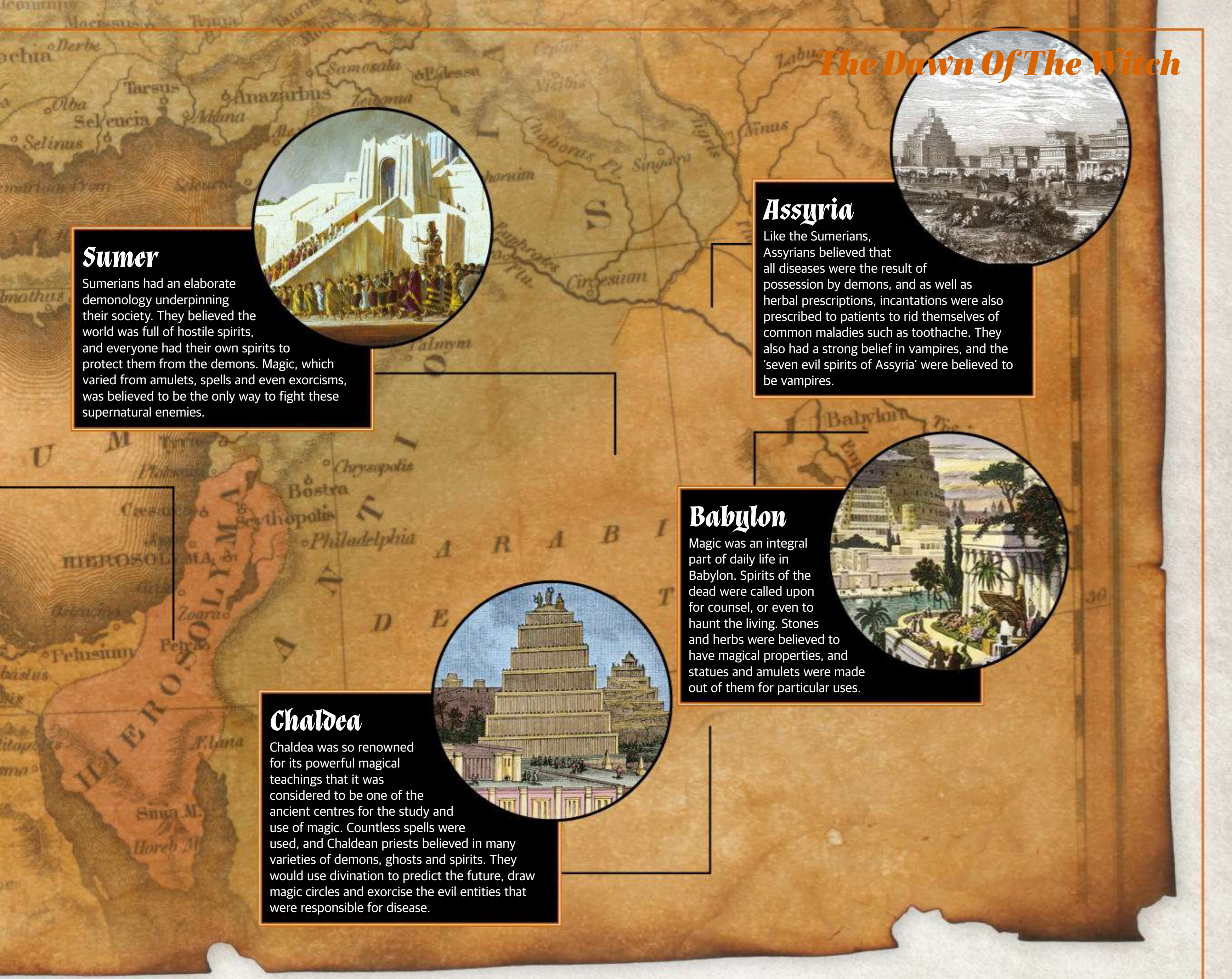


the weather and even shape-shift. The practice of burning witches occurred in Rome far before it became associated with Christians, and for the Roman rulers this presented a unique opportunity to deal with other undesirables, such as those who followed different religions.

Isis was an incredibly prominent figure who sat at the centre of a cult that threatened to extinguish the early sparks of Christianity. This goddess was worshipped not only in Egypt but also throughout the Roman Empire. As well as being presented as a perfect mother and wife, Isis was a goddess of magic, but unlike the negative examples often displayed in other myths, Isis seemed to represent the idealised form of a magical woman. She was friend to the downtrodden but also to the elite of society, and she was a devoted mother who used her powers for good. Although worship of her was initially frowned upon in the Roman Empire, when Emperor Caligula showed his support, the cult surrounding Isis began to flourish. The religion actually developed alongside Christianity in its most formative years, and there is some argument that this image of Isis as a heavenly mother with a prophesied son of kings influenced early Christianity.

Although the two religions grew side by side, they were simply incompatible, and sooner or later one would have to erase the other. In Christian texts there are no blurred lines regarding witchcraft, with the Bible stating that anyone who "casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead… is detestable to the Lord". To further drive the point home it also warns, "Do not allow a sorceress to live." For Christianity, witchcraft was seen as running counter to religion and even associated with the devil. Isis and her magic were regarded as evil pagan beliefs. As Christianity spread, the cult of Isis and worship of any other pagan gods was outlawed, and in the 6th century Isis' temple on the island of Philae, which had served as a pilgrimage site for thousands of years, was closed by the Christian Emperor Justinian.

In the 350s CE Roman Emperor Constantius II banned the use of magic, although his law was widely ignored



Sumer

Sumerians had an elaborate demonology underpinning their society. They believed the world was full of hostile spirits, and everyone had their own spirits to protect them from the demons. Magic, which varied from amulets, spells and even exorcisms, was believed to be the only way to fight these supernatural enemies.

Assyria

Like the Sumerians, Assyrians believed that all diseases were the result of possession by demons, and as well as herbal prescriptions, incantations were also prescribed to patients to rid themselves of common maladies such as toothache. They also had a strong belief in vampires, and the 'seven evil spirits of Assyria' were believed to be vampires.

Babylon

Magic was an integral part of daily life in Babylon. Spirits of the dead were called upon for counsel, or even to haunt the living. Stones and herbs were believed to have magical properties, and statues and amulets were made out of them for particular uses.

Chaldea

Chaldea was so renowned for its powerful magical teachings that it was considered to be one of the ancient centres for the study and use of magic. Countless spells were used, and Chaldean priests believed in many varieties of demons, ghosts and spirits. They would use divination to predict the future, draw magic circles and exorcise the evil entities that were responsible for disease.

Christianity also pointed the finger at adulterous, or rather, unmarried according to the strict Christian standard, women as the ultimate embodiment of evil, claiming that 'unconstrained women, perverted by Satan, profess to ride upon the backs of beasts with a countless horde of women'. These pagan women were accused of 'infidelity' and being drawn into a 'pit of faithlessness'. As powerful female sorceresses such as Isis were condemned, it is easy to see how the perception of the dangerous female witch was encouraged, not eradicated, by the spread of Christianity.

Christianity itself did not spring out of the gate fully formed; it developed over years of labour and toil, and it is almost impossible to believe that it could not have been influenced by the religions around it. Most religions are syncretic at some point. So many of these religions relied on witchcraft or belief in magic, so for Christianity, witchcraft was classed as a superstition, something that did not actually exist. Early Christianity actually established that belief in witchcraft alone was proof a person had been deceived by the devil and so could be executed. This set Christianity in opposition to many of the flourishing religions at the time and allowed for its later domination. Anyone who even believed witchcraft was possible (an essential part of many religions) was demonised, and heretic after heretic was executed. Just like the Greeks, Hebrews and Romans before them, the Christians used magic and witchcraft as a scapegoat and a way of demonising the different.

> The cult of Isis was so powerful that Cleopatra claimed to be the goddess reincarnated

For almost as long as magic has existed, laws against it have prevailed. Often these views against witchcraft and those who practised magic were a response to religions spreading and encountering mysterious belief systems that ran in opposition to their own, such as in the case of the Jews and the spread of Christianity. Even in the societies that practised magic, such as ancient Greece and Rome, there were strict laws defining what was 'acceptable'. These depictions of magic users in myth were exploited to fuel an idealised image of how society – especially women – should behave, and any who rebelled were associated with the demonic figures from myth.

For centuries, images of these infamous women from myth would be used to fuel common perceptions of female witches. It's only recently that we've seen this ancient propaganda begin to be re-evaluated in the light of more nuanced views.

The Ghoul Next Door

Revered and feared in villages across Europe, cunning folk and their magic were part of everyday life until a new move against witches led many to their deaths

Written by June Woolerton

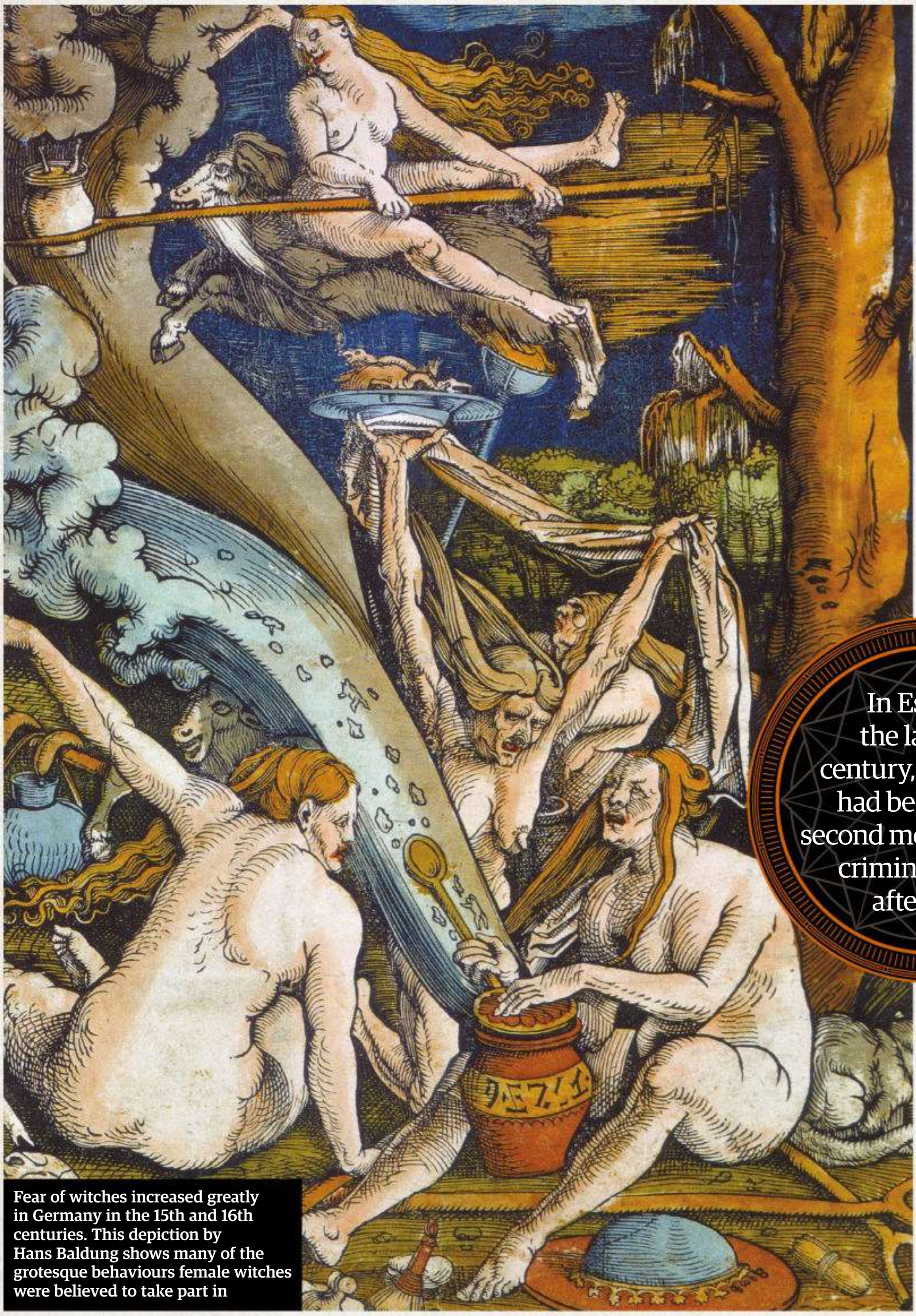
When Issobell Sinclair admitted she had talked to fairies as she tried to protect cattle from harm on Hallowe'en with a sheet and some hair, she sealed her fate. The Scottish woman was hanged as a witch soon after her trial in 1633. But just a century earlier she might have gone unharmed, even unnoticed. For Issobell was following a path that thousands of men and women had taken for centuries. White witches, also called cunning or wise folk, had been an integral part of many God fearing communities since Roman times. They made cures, gave advice and offered protection to people and their livelihoods. But as organised religion changed and fear of witchcraft spread in the 16th and 17th centuries, the thin line between their practices and the darker arts of black witchcraft blurred, and soon the places they had once called home were no place for the ghoul next door.

Magic was so widely practised in Tudor England that leading cleric, Bishop Hugh Latimer, warned openly in 1552 that "a great many of us when we be in trouble, or sickness, or lose anything, we run hither and thither to witches, or sorcerers, whom we call wise men…". Just about everyone knew where to find a witch or cunning person to help them with their problems. It was no different across Europe. The wise folk were a fixture in their communities, inspiring both respect and fear. In an age when science could offer little explanation for anything, their wisdom held power.

The position was open to anyone although some people were believed to be born with special powers. Seventh sons of seventh sons were said to be able to cure goitre and scrofula. There was also a belief that special powers could be inherited or passed on from one cunning person to their chosen successor. But anyone who wanted to learn magic and was willing to try it could acquire a reputation as one of the cunning folk. The range of people practising magic can be seen in the convictions secured in Rouen in France in 1605 when shepherds, apothecaries and labourers were all found guilty of being witches. They came from all walks of life and often lived in the very heart of their communities.

Potions made of urine and hair were made for protection against witches, who would suffer pain if the bottle was buried or burned

Whether their spells worked wasn't really the issue. Once someone was known as a wise man or woman, they would find themselves consulted on a regular basis. Often they did it for prestige rather than to get rich. Many cunning folk earned very little from their magic and many kept prices



Fear of witches increased greatly in Germany in the 15th and 16th centuries. This depiction by Hans Baldung shows many of the grotesque behaviours female witches were believed to take part in

low to make sure they undercut business rivals. Some refused to take money at all. Ann Jefferies, a teenage servant in Cornwall, fell seriously ill in 1645 and on her recovery said she had been visited by fairies during her sickness. She soon gained a reputation for being able to cure by touch but despite becoming a local celebrity, she always refused payment.

It's no surprise her skills were in such demand. Cunning folk were often consulted for cures for both people and animals. They used spells and charms which held their own against the less-than-sophisticated medicine of the day in terms of popularity. Common practices included mumbling words over the patient or placing scribbled messages on them. Often these derived from old Latin phrases which the witch's mostly illiterate clients couldn't read. Some of the charms contained a form of prayer – Jane Howe from Somerset wrote down some of the methods she knew including one said to stop bleeding which ended by calling for a divine blessing. Curing by touch was popular across Europe as was the use of herbs and plants. Here the white witch's practices were close to traditional medicine which also relied on botanics to cure, but the cunning folk always ascribed their success to magic. And they were always at pains to point out that they had to be involved in the treatment if it was to stand any chance of success.

"What a witch said held sway, and much of their influence came from fear"

Witches were also asked for help in resolving crime, including the return of stolen goods. Sometimes they were reported to do this by showing their clients the image of the criminal in a glass or mirror or by using a crystal ball to identify them. Often, the very knowledge that the local cunning man or woman had been consulted was enough in itself to spur the thief into handing back what had been taken, for their powers, even when used for good, inspired fear. Usually, a condition of helping was that the wrongdoer escaped any punishment. What a white witch said held sway, and much of their influence in the local community came from fear.

In Essex in the late 16th century, witchcraft had become the second most common criminal charge after theft

After all, they were known for their powers which many believed could cure (or create) illness and tell the future. No one wanted to be on the receiving end of the darker of those skills if they were turned on them in revenge.

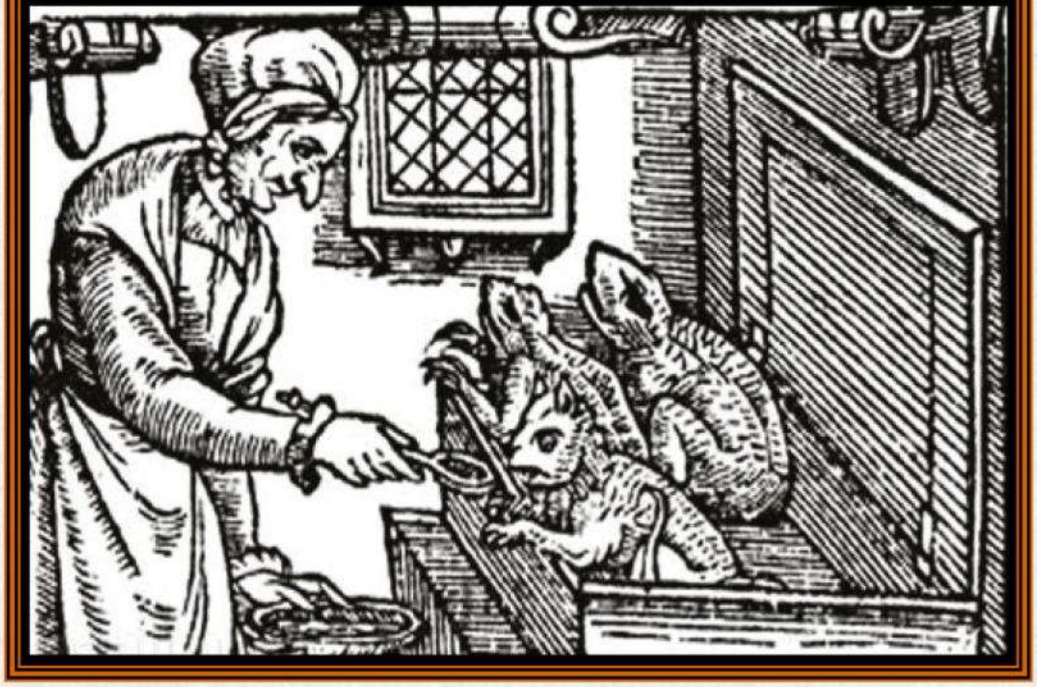
Love magic was also popular, with white witches consulted to help bring about a marriage or reinvigorate a relationship that had gone off the boil. Wise women were widely consulted on pregnancy and childbirth, attending deliveries and staying with mothers afterwards. White witches were also believed to be able to detect other witches whose intentions were harmful. Illness at the time could be seen as a sign of being bewitched and as well as asking for a cure, the client of the cunning folk might also want to discover who was doing them harm. The white witch rarely named a suspect. Instead, they would offer instructions on rituals which they said would draw the perpetrator to the victim's house, or they would tell them that the person they met at a particular time was the guilty party. But in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, it became the white

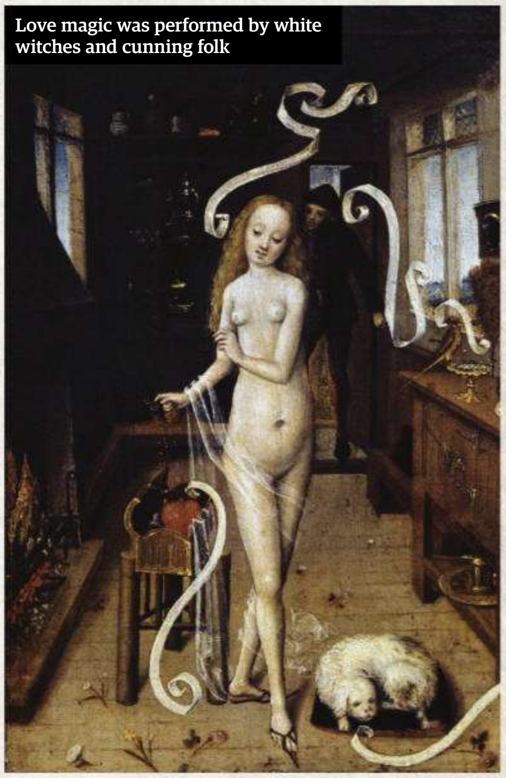
Why witches were usually women

Usually old, sometimes ugly, often female. The witch of children's fairytales still lingers as a stereotype today. Court records show that across Europe the majority of those tried as witches were women even though white witches and cunning folk were just as likely to be men. However, as the Church became more intent on stamping out all forms of heresy, women became the main focus of witch hunts.

From the 15th century onwards women were seen as increasingly vulnerable to the temptations of magic. They were viewed as sex mad and seriously stupid by many, and clerics writing on demonology described lust-filled women who were seduced into evil by the Devil and took part in unholy orgies.

Later reformers took an equally dim view. For Martin Luther, women were so weak that they were easily won over by the promises of magic. In the 16th and 17th centuries, witches were nearly always women and any men caught in the act were usually seen to have been tempted over to darkness by a wicked woman. But when the wave of persecutions ended and witchcraft was no longer pursued through the courts, the wise folk recorded in local communities once more featured men as well as women.





Love magic was performed by white witches and cunning folk

witch who was increasingly at risk of capture as Christian theology became less forgiving.

Attitudes to all forms of magic had been changing rapidly since the 1400s. The early Christian Church called both magic and witchcraft delusions. But during the Middle Ages, clerics turned their attention to witchcraft again. The German churchman, Heinrich Kramer, saw witches as a real threat to society and to the souls of his congregation. His *Malleus Maleficarum*, published in 1487, insisted that witchcraft was real and a heresy. It would influence attitudes for three hundred years. Kramer wanted witches hunted down, tortured if need be to extract confessions and put to death. Black witches, who used magic to harm others, were liable to arrest already. But now the idea began to take hold that all witches were wrong. Their powers came under suspicion and they were increasingly seen as agents of the Devil, in league with demons and taking part in dreadful rituals.

White witches or cunning folk were called many other names, including wizard, blessing witch, enchanter and charmer

Within decades, clerics in southern Germany had started often large-scale witch hunts which then spread to other countries. In Trier, a series of persecutions under Archbishop Johann VII von Schonenberg at the end of the century left two villages with just two residents – the rest had been executed as witches.

In Lorraine, the judge Nicholas Remy claimed he had sentenced 900 witches to death in just ten years. Court records show that many of those accused were originally suspected because they carried out what had previously been thought of as everyday magic. Under duress or through fear, many confessed to darker forms of witchcraft. Sometimes, those who admitted to being a witch went on to point the finger at others. In 1582, Ursula Kemp was arrested in St Osyth in Essex and admitted using witchcraft to kill a child and her own sister in law. She then accused others of being witches – several went on to confess to gruesome crimes after their arrests. Confessions were often obtained by torture.

Hysteria around witchcraft began to build across Europe. Jobs that had been the preserve of the respected wise woman, like midwifery, became a target for persecutions especially as beliefs grew that witches used fat from children to make flying ointments. In 1669, a 67-year-old lying-in maid called Anna Ebeler was hanged in Augsburg in Germany after being accused of killing a new mother with a bowl of soup. In England, witchfinders began to appear. These self-appointed justices would visit different towns and, for a set fee, root out supposed witches who were then handed over to the courts.

The witch hunts across Europe in the 16th and 17th century are believed to have led to at least 40,000 documented executions. Many more are thought to have died while in prison awaiting trial or to have taken their own lives through fear. By the 18th century, witchcraft began to fade from criminal records, but the Enlightenment also meant that many of the old practices that had got white witches into so much trouble had lost their sway with people. Old wives' tales and folklore still exist, but they are just echoes of a time when they gave real power to the ghoul next door.

15 Most Notorious Witches

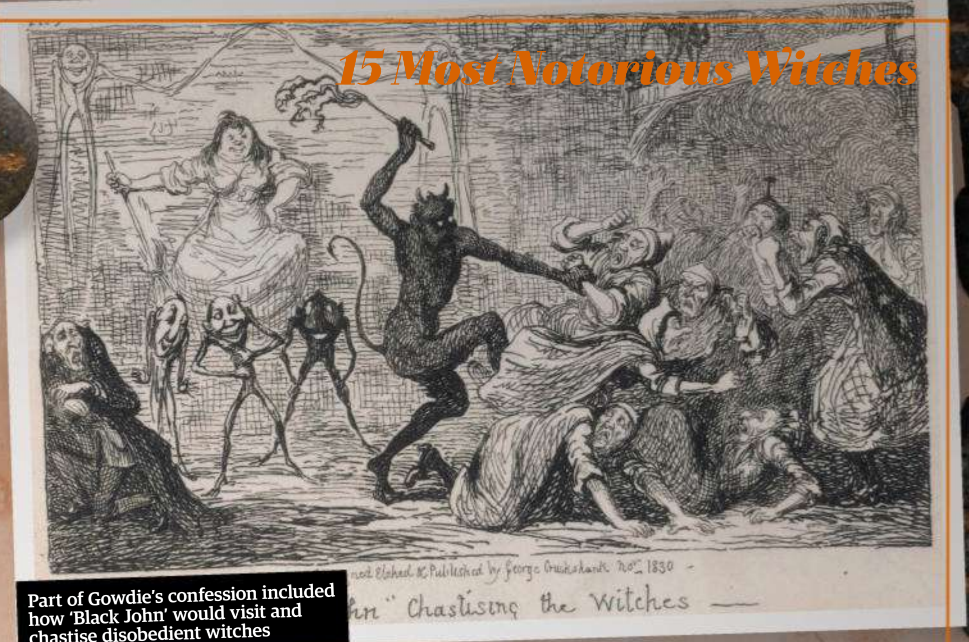
Meet the individuals whose status of witch – whether true or not – have helped shape the folklore of witches

It's difficult to strike the right chord when talking about witch trials and the events surrounding them as they are, through the eyes of a modern historian looking back, both violent and outlandish. Today, the phenomenon of charging people with crimes of magic and enchantment and putting them on trial seems more suited to a *Monty Python* sketch than events from a 'civilised' world. But of course, they were deadly and anything but ridiculous.

For centuries, thousands of people accused of witchcraft were tortured and killed in the most sadistic of ways. For the townsfolk and villagers living in the time of witch trials, you were either religious or you were damned. And so a pattern emerges in the tales – women who lived at the fringe of society, maybe on a second or third marriage and perhaps involved in healing. When the harvest is bountiful and the animals healthy, such figures can be tolerated. In the middle of a harsh winter, with failed crops or sick family members with an illness one can't understand, that outcast on the edge of town becomes a figure of suspicion.

As events gather pace, genuine fear and worry transform into hysteria and neighbours are being accused of anything from consorting with the devil, to eating babies, to smiting an enemy's crops to flying around on pitchforks. No longer were the trials about defeating the devil, they were about rivals settling old scores.

The accused had no hope – innocence was a hard thing to prove and many innocent actions would often be seen as indicative of witchcraft or enchantment. The price to pay was high and many of the accused awaited a grisly fate – hanging, being burned alive, drowning and beheading were common, and this was often after torture had secured a confession.


Etched & Published by George Cruikshank Nov 1830
hn" Chastising the Witches

Part of Gowdie's confession included how 'Black John' would visit and chastise disobedient witches

Isobel Gowdie

Location: Auldearn, Scotland
Year of accusation: 1662

Isobel Gowdie takes her place in this collection for two reasons. The first is that her remarkably detailed testimony provides insight into the folklore surrounding witchcraft towards the end of the witch-hunt era in Europe. The second is that she appears to have volunteered the information, no violent torture necessary.

Not much is actually know of Gowdie's life; it's generally agreed she was of low social status and most likely illiterate, but there are no records of whether she was arrested or came forward voluntarily. It is also generally agreed that she gave her confession without being tortured. On 10 April 1662, just three days before her first confession, the Privy Council prohibited torture being used to gain confessions from suspected witches.

Whatever she may have lacked in education and social standing, Gowdie more than made up for with her ability to tell a story. Her confessions range from how she renounced her baptism so the Devil could place his mark on her, to sexual encounters with the Devil; digging up a child's body; flying around on horses; socialising with the Queen of the Fairies; transforming into a jackdaw; killing people or animals with elf arrows made by the Devil and details of chants and spells. Her confessions also included names of other coven members, which lead to 41 people being arrested.

Although no record exists of Gowdie's death, before 1678 most Scottish witches tried by the Privy Council would have been executed, usually strangled and then burned.

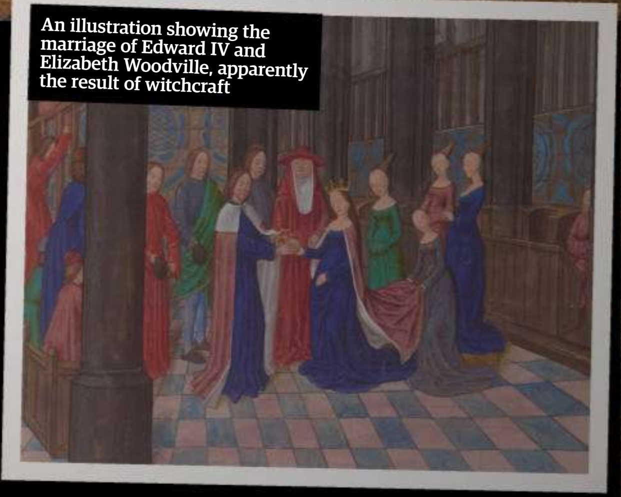
Jacquetta Woodville

Location: Warwick, England
Year of accusation: 1469

Despite her daughter, Elizabeth, being married to King Edward VI, and having numerous alliances with important figures, Jacquetta Woodville, Duchess of Bedford, was still accused of being a witch.

Her accuser was Thomas Wake. A follower of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, he picked a hell of a time to speak up. Edward IV been captured by the Earl of Warwick that year, and Woodville's husband and son had both been executed by Warwick. Wake headed to Warwick Castle, proudly brandishing a figure of a man made of lead, which Wake said Woodville used for witchcraft. He also convinced a parish clerk, John Daunger, to say that Woodville had made two other images; one for the king and one for the queen, and had used sorcery to secure the marriage. Woodville was arrested and transported to Warwick Castle.

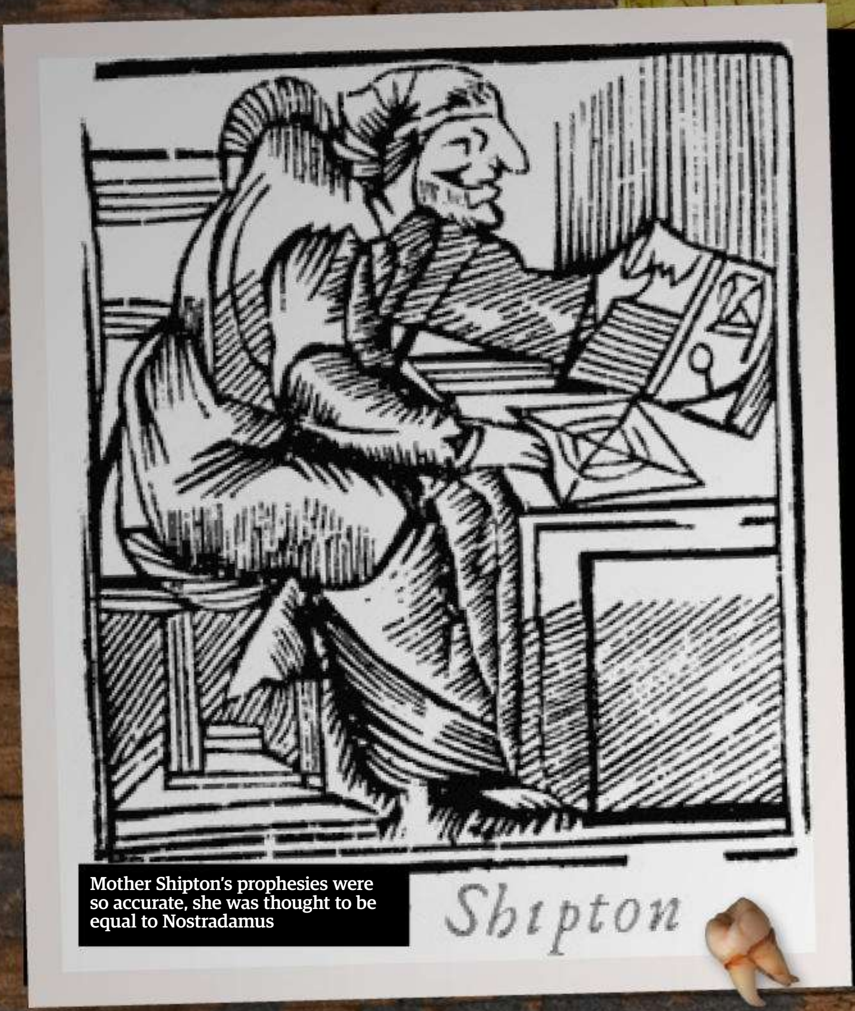
> "The case against Woodville was tenuous at the best of times"



An illustration showing the marriage of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, apparently the result of witchcraft

But Woodville refused to quietly accept her fate. She contacted the city officials of London, gently reminding them of how she had persuaded Margaret of Anjou to spare the city from Lancastrian hands. They agreed to help her and so swiftly got in touch with the Duke of Clarence, an ally of Warwick's.

The case against Woodville was tenuous at the best of times, but once Edward IV was released, it completely collapsed. In January 1470, Woodville rose up against Wake at the king's council, accusing him of having a vendetta against her. The 'witnesses' rounded up by Wake changed their story and she was acquitted. Woodville requested her exoneration to be part of the official record, which was agreed on 10 February 1470, though she never fully escaped allegations.



Mother Shipton's prophesies were so accurate, she was thought to be equal to Nostradamus

Mother Shipton

Location: Knaresborough, Yorkshire
Year of accusation: N/A

Some say that the idea of a witch being a hideous, hook-nosed, sunken cheeked, warty, hunched old woman originated with the legend of Mother Shipton, an infamous 16th century prophetess.

The daughter of Agatha Southeil, herself a supposed witch, it is said Mother Shipton (real name Ursula) was born in a cave with a full set of teeth that stuck right out, protruding eyes and a deformed physique. She was thought to be the devil's child, and yet seems to have been taken in by the townsfolk.

Appearance aside, her legend lies in her ability to predict the future. Her forecasts were so accurate and in demand, that people would travel great distances to consult with her. She was often called upon to use her powers to help solve disputes, and so canny were her predictions that wrongdoers often confessed to their actions. But then her predictions started to become more grand. She is supposed to have predicted all sorts of events, from Mary, Queen of Scots being executed, to the defeat of the Spanish Armada, to the Great Plague of 1665. Her name is most closely linked with her prophecy of the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Mother Shipton died c1561. Richard Head edited a book of her prophecies, published in 1684. Although he later admitted to having made up most of the autobiographical details, Mother Shipton is still remembered as England's most famous prophetess.

Angéle de la Barthe

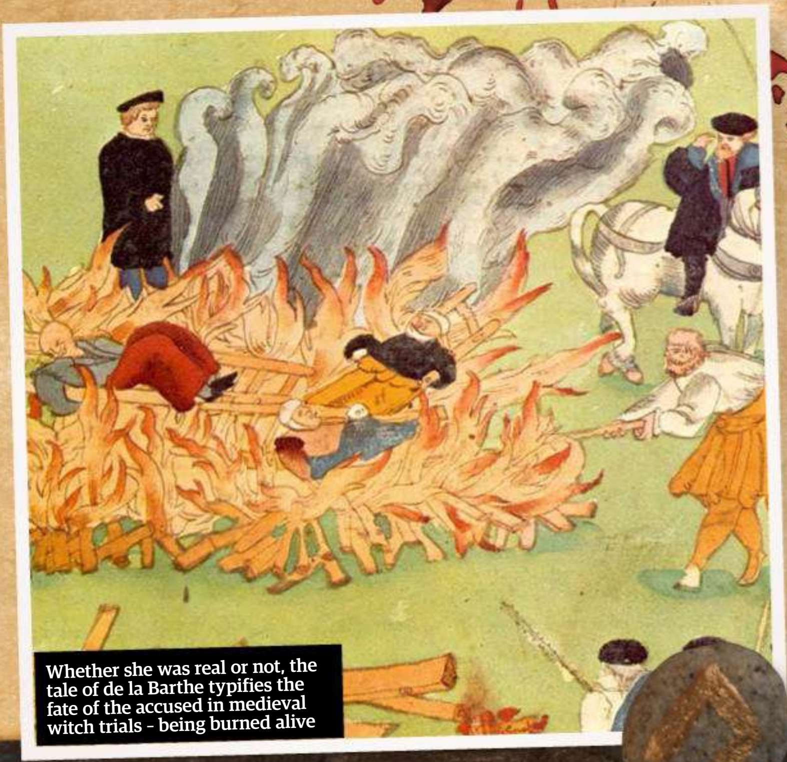
Location: Toulouse, France
Year of accusation: 1275

Having sex with the devil and giving birth to a monster with a wolf's head and a serpent's tail, whose sole source of food was babies are the reasons Angéle de la Barthe met her end.

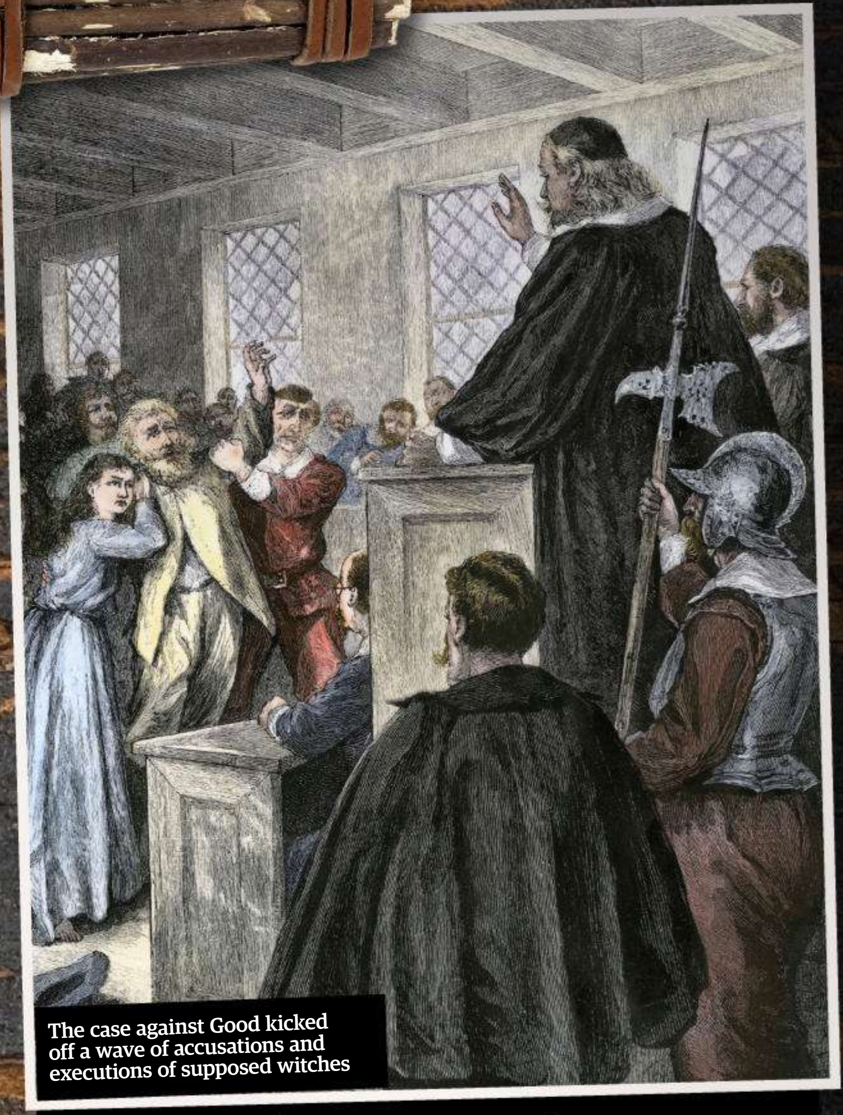
That, and the fact she was devoted to Catharism, a Gnostic Christian sect deemed heretical by the Catholic Church. Her accuser was Hugo de Benoils, an Inquisitor who claimed de la Barthe had kidnapped and killed children to feed her monster baby, and was responsible for many child disappearances for the past two years.

After being violently tortured, de la Barthe confessed to everything, saying that her baby-eating monster had flown away to avoid capture. She was found guilty and burned alive.

For a long time, de la Barthe was considered the first person to be executed for heretical sorcery in the medieval witch trials. However, her story is now largely regarded to be fictional because there is no evidence of the trial in court records. Also, more interestingly, having sex with demons was not considered illegal at the time. It has instead been suggested that de la Barthe was simply an easy target for religious fanaticism. She was probably a bit of an outsider, and fell victim to a zealot Inquisitor and a general mistrust of anything 'other'.



Whether she was real or not, the tale of de la Barthe typifies the fate of the accused in medieval witch trials - being burned alive



The case against Good kicked off a wave of accusations and executions of supposed witches

Sarah Good

Location: Salem, Massachusetts
Year of accusation: 1692

The Salem witch trials have near-mythical status, and the hysteria and speed with which people turned on each other perfectly exemplifies how fear leads to violence.

Sarah Good was one of the first victims of the trials. After losing her house and possessions to pay the debts of her first husband, she was forced to beg among the community. There are accounts of her sometimes cursing any who didn't help - an act born out of frustration and embarrassment that would go on to be used against her.

On 25 February 1692, Good was named by Abigail Williams and Elizabeth 'Betty' Parris as being one of three who cursed them, causing odd convulsions. The hearing began on 15 March, whereupon seeing Good, the two girls started to fit. One of them also accused Good of using a spectre to try and stab her, producing a broken knife as evidence. The fact that one of the spectators said it was his knife he had thrown away held no sway, though. The frenzy was on. Her own husband testified she had a witch's mark on her back, and then her daughter (who was four or five) showed a small bite on her finger, which she said was from a snake her mother had given her.

Good was hanged on 19 July 1692. After being urged by Nicholas Noyes, Salem's reverend, to confess, she replied "I'm no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take away my life, God will give you blood to drink." He later died of a brain haemorrhage.

Märet Jonsdotter

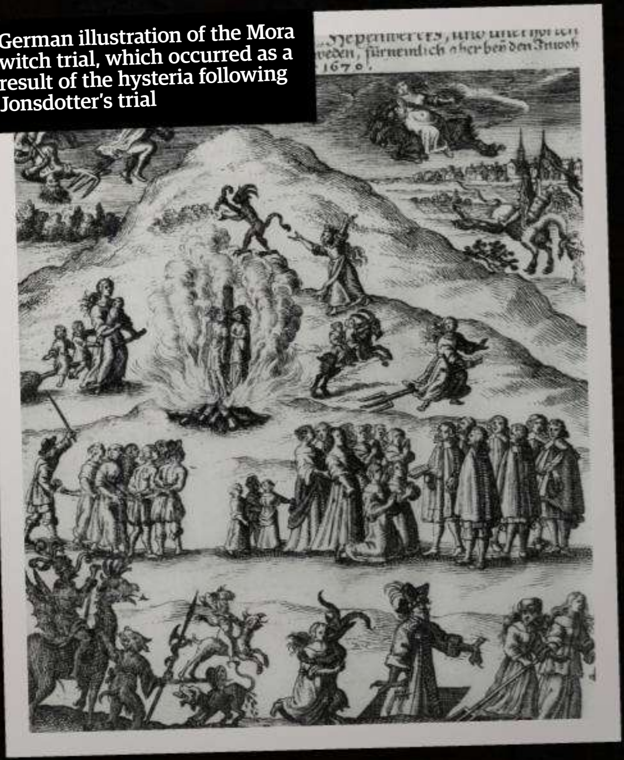
Location: Älvdalen, Sweden
Year of accusation: 1668 and 1672

The Great Noise (1668-76) was a witch hunt that ravaged through Sweden and Märet Jonsdotter had the displeasure of being the person who started it all. She was pulled into the madness thanks to a 12-year-old girl called Gertrud Svensdotter, who herself was being questioned for supposedly walking on water. Her response, no doubt encouraged by her questioners, was that she had been given the gift by someone in league with the Devil. That person was Märet Jonsdotter.

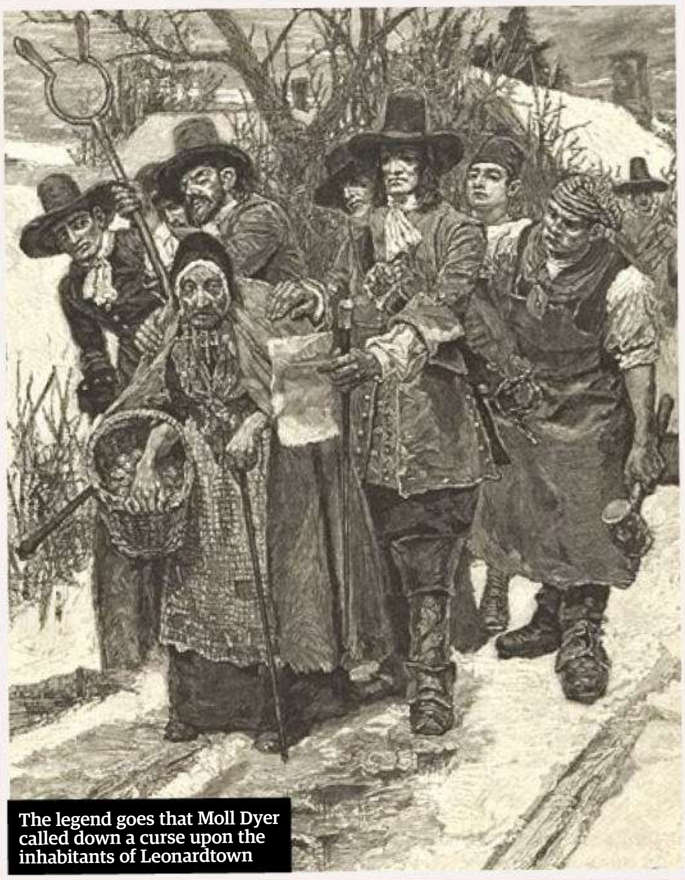
But there was a problem. Swedish law had banned he execution of anyone who didn't confess to a crime, and Jonsdotter consistently maintained her innocence. However, the court wanted a conviction, so a plan was conducted for the priests to tell her she was to be executed regardless of guilt, but if she confessed, she would receive holy communion and therefore allowed to enter heaven. But Jonsdotter still claimed innocence. The authorities reluctantly took her back to prison.

While Jonsdotter remained in prison, steadfastly proclaiming her innocence. a fearful hysteria was spreading over Sweden, with Jonsdotter's trial leading to the Mora witch trial. This saw 60 people accused of witchcraft, with 14 killed that year.

On 16 April 1672, the authorities ran out of patience and Jonsdotter was found guilty of witchcraft, due to the testimonies and devil's mark on her finger (a birthmark). She, along with 33 others, were executed in September 1672. In 1674, after suspecting that some accused proclaimed innocence to escape the death penalty, the court deemed it no longer necessary for a suspected witch to confess.


weden, fürnemlich aber bey den Inwoh
1670.

German illustration of the Mora witch trial, which occurred as a result of the hysteria following Jonsdotter's trial



The legend goes that Moll Dyer called down a curse upon the inhabitants of Leonardtown

Moll Dyer

Location: Leonardtown, Maryland
Year of accusation: 1697

The figure of Moll Dyer is interesting, because although largely accepted to be just a story, her tale perfectly illustrates the hysteria of the witch trials. Thought to be an Irish noblewoman who left her homeland to escape a nefarious past, Dyer took residence in an isolated cottage, occasionally working as a herbal healer. Her way of living made the locals suspicious, and so they labelled her a witch. But as long as she kept to herself, she wasn't a threat.

Unfortunately a series of natural events changed all that. The winter of 1697 in Maryland was particularly harsh, leaving many dead and scant food for those that survived. Eyes started to settle on Dyer, with rumours that she had cursed the town. Then an epidemic (probably influenza) ravaged the population, killing many. It was too much for some locals, who blamed Dyer. They set fire to her cottage on a freezing night, causing Dyer to flee into the woods. Succumbing to the elements, Dyer knelt by a large rock, rested one hand against it and with the other, called a curse upon the land and her persecutors. When her body was removed days later, it is said that her hand left an impression in the rock, as a permanent reminder of her curse.

The boulder is now outside the Leonardtown courthouse and although no handprint can be seen, visitors report suffering aches when near it. When the nights are at their coldest, there are also reports of a woman with long white hair and a white dress walking through the woods, and of a white dog causing accidents on Moll Dyer road.

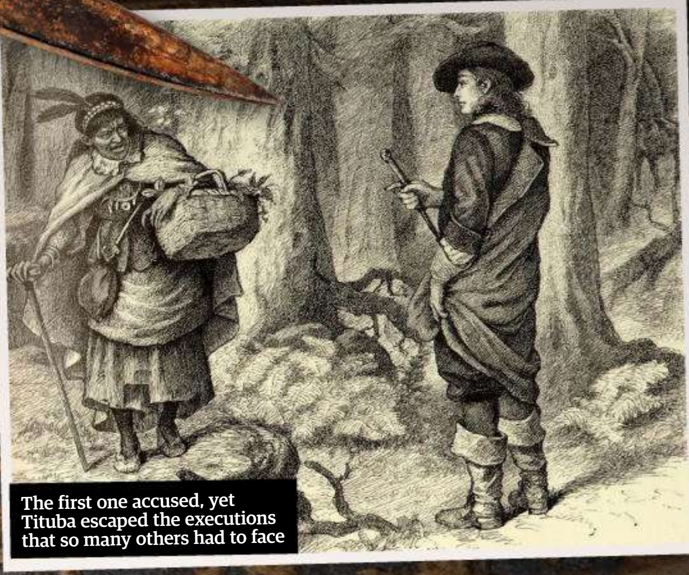
Alice Kyteler

Location: Kilkenny, Ireland
Year of accusation: 1324

The allegations against Dame Alice Kyteler are notable for including two firsts: her case is one of the first European witch trials and the first recorded claim of demon sex.

Kyteler had already been accused of murdering her first husband. But when her fourth husband, Sir John le Poer, became ill in 1324, he expressed concern that he had been poisoned. When he died, accusations were set in motion. His children rallied against Kyteler, claiming she had used poison and sorcery against their father. They also accused Kyteler, her servants and her son of denying Christianity, blasphemy, and making animal sacrifices to demons. The accusations were taken seriously, with Kyteler and her group being formally investigated for a host of acts, including heresy, using potions to corrupt Christians, murdering, and having a sexual affair with a demon.

Kyteler refused to meekly accept the charges, and used her influence to get the bishop dealing with her case, Richard de Ledrede, arrested. This caused the Lord Chief Justice, John Darcy, to travel to Kilkenny to see what was going on, and he subsequently vindicated the bishop. He quickly set about trying to get Kyteler arrested and turned his attention to her associates. Petronella de Meath, one of her servants, was the first to break and confessed to witchcraft after being viciously tortured. Her testimony led her to be the first person burnt at the stake for witchcraft in Ireland, and gave Kyteler's persecutors all they needed. She was convicted in 1325 but the night before her planned execution, she escaped, probably to England, and was never heard of again.



The first one accused, yet Tituba escaped the executions that so many others had to face

Tituba

Location: Salem, Massachusetts
Year of accusation: 1692

Tituba holds the dubious honour of being the first person accused in what went on to become the Salem witch trials. A Native American slave belonging to Reverend Samuel Parris, hers was the first name uttered by Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Parris as using sorcery to give them convulsions, closely followed by Sarah Osborne and Sarah Good. Unlike Good, Tituba confessed to the accusations and then went on to accuse others of witchcraft, a pattern that is seen in many other trials.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the fact she was both an accused witch and a foreigner to the people of Salem, Tituba was not sentenced to be executed. She did have to stay in prison for 13 months because Parris wouldn't pay her jail fees, but then an unknown person paid the fees and took her from the village. Nothing is known about her life after this.

Agnes Waterhouse

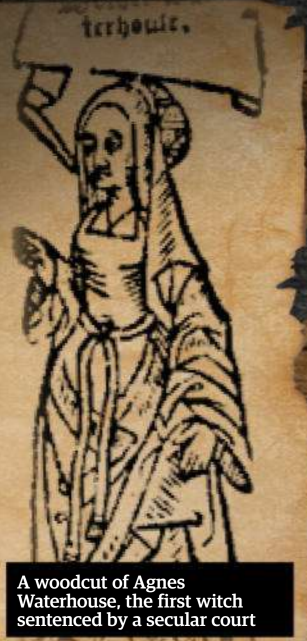
Location: England
Year of accusation: 1566

Agnes Waterhouse, or Mother Waterhouse as she is commonly known, is considered England's most famous witch and seems as though she was more than comfortable with her dark dallyings. She was also the first witch to be accused and sentenced by a secular court. It was rare for the Church not to be involved in trials.

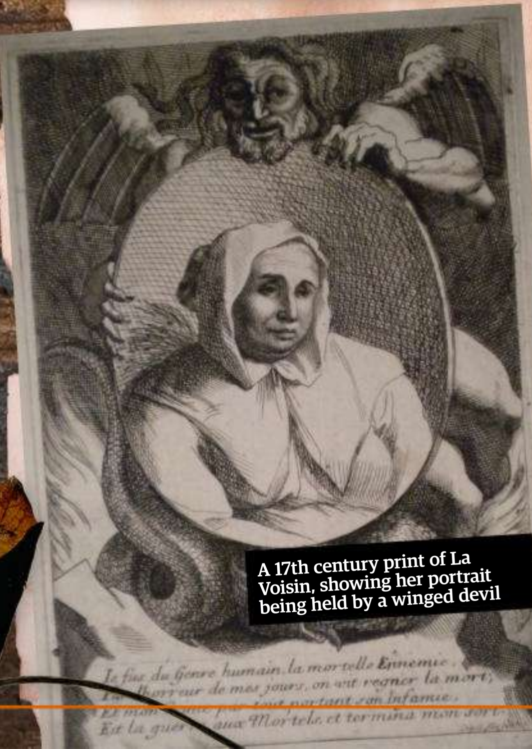
Waterhouse had a cat called Satan, who she said could kill animals and which later transformed into a toad. Waterhouse's daughter, Joan, asked the toad for help after a neighbour's child, Agnes Brown, refused her some food. The toad said he would help if Joan would surrender her soul, which she agreed to. Deal made, the toad set about haunting Brown in the form of a black dog.

It is this that became the crux of the case against Waterhouse. During her testimony, Agnes described the dog as having horns on his head and threatening her with a knife. When she asked who the dog's "dame" was, the toad gestured to Waterhouse's home with his head.

That was all that was needed. Two days after the trial ended, Waterhouse was executed. Despite exhibiting bravado throughout the trial, when faced with death she prayed for God's forgiveness.



A woodcut of Agnes Waterhouse, the first witch sentenced by a secular court


Je fus du Genre humain la mortelle Ennemie,
l'horreur de mes jours, on vit regner la mort,
aux Mortels et termina mon sort.

A 17th century print of La Voisin, showing her portrait being held by a winged devil

Catherine Monvoisin

Location: Paris, France
Year of accusation: 1680

Most commonly known as 'La Voisin', Catherine Monvoisin was an infamous French sorceress who became associated with the Affair of the Poisons; a series of murders supposedly the result of black masses. Although she was ultimately burned at the stake as a witch, her services of divination, potions and midwifery had made her a favourite among the elite Paris ladies.

But all this started to go wrong in 1675. The Marquise de Brinvilliers had been put on trial for poisoning her father and siblings. She was found guilty and executed, but her trial called attention to a number of suspicious deaths and as a result, alchemists and fortune tellers were rounded up and interrogated.

Poisoner and fortune teller, Marie Bosse, named La Voisin as being involved, and she was arrested. La Voisin herself implicated a number of important figures of the French court, including the king's mistress, the Marquise de Montespan. Her apparent willingness to help did her no favours, though. She was instead convicted of witchcraft and poisoning and burned on the Place de Grève in the centre of Paris.

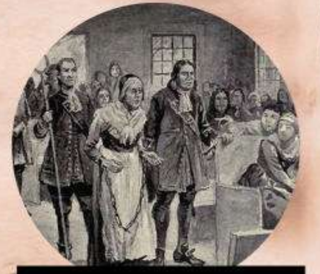
The witches that inspired film and TV

As well as offering a valuable social insight to the past, witches and witch trials have also inspired characters and plots in modern entertainment

THE WITCH (2015)

General 17th century

Although not based on one real witch figure, filmmaker Robert Eggers spent a long time researching the witch trials of the period to capture the mood of the film. And it worked. The tale of one family descending into madness and tragedy, with suspicion of the eldest daughter being a witch, perfectly captures how trying environments, lack of food and superstition can tip people over the edge.

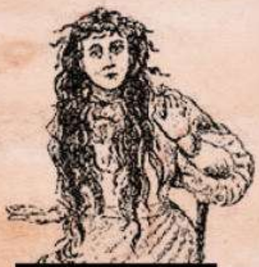


The classic figure of locals rounding up suspected witches prevailed in the New World

AN AMERICAN HAUNTING (2005)

The tale of the Bell Witch

The summer of 1817 was the beginning of the Bell Witch haunting in Tennessee. Centring around John Bell's family, specifically his daughter Betsy, the story soon spread, especially when the witch apparently said she would kill John Bell. He did die in 1820, supposedly poisoned by the witch. While a sad tale, the film amplifies and invents details, even taking a foray into child abuse.

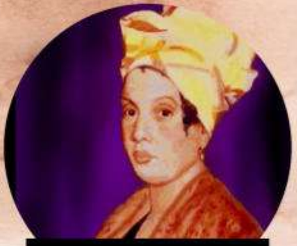


Betsy Bell, the victim of the Bell Witch

AMERICAN HORROR STORY: COVEN (2013)

Marie Laveau

There are many characters based on real figures in this third series of the *AHS* franchise, but Marie Laveau is perhaps the most recognisable. Anglea Bassett's portrayal of the renowned voodoo queen is based on the infamous New Orleans figure of the 1800s. While there aren't many specifics known about her life, she has gained legendary status, especially in New Orleans.



Voodoo queen Marie Laveau enjoyed notoriety in New Orleans

> "The king was piqued by the thought of witchcraft, and would question the witches himself"

Alizon Device

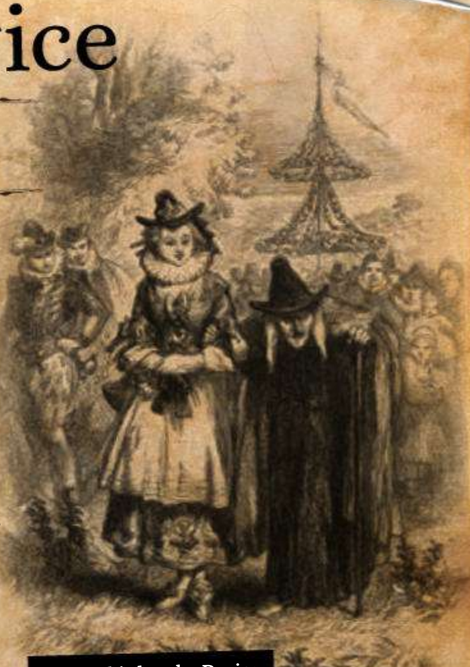
Location: Lancashire, England
Year of accusation: 1612

The case of Alizon Device and John Law caught the attention of local magistrate, Roger Nowell, culminating in the Pendle witch trials.

It starts off innocently enough. Alizon Device, the granddaughter of Demdike, who was commonly regarded as a witch, was on her way to Trawden Forest. She met John Law, who worked as a pedlar, and asked him for some pins. In the 17th century, pins were known as being used in healing and love magic. Law refused the request, either because Device had no money, or because he didn't want to sell a small quantity. The two parted ways, but then Device saw Law fall from his horse, possibly having suffered a stroke.

To begin with, Law made no accusation of Device having harmed him, but she was apparently convinced she had unleashed her powers against him, and asked his forgiveness.

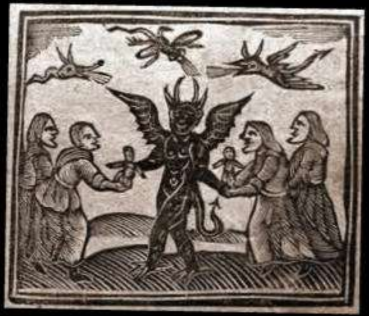
Device, her mother and brother were hauled before Nowell. Device said she had sold her soul to the devil and her brother told of how she had bewitched a child. Device was asked about Anne Whittle, the matriarch of another family linked with witchcraft. It is thought there was bad blood between the two, and Device accused Whittle of killing four men using witchcraft. There was no mercy, and Device was hung at Gallows Hill.



Anne Whittle, who Device accused of murdering four men, including her father

Agnes Sampson

Location: Nether Keith, Scotland
Year of accusation: 1590



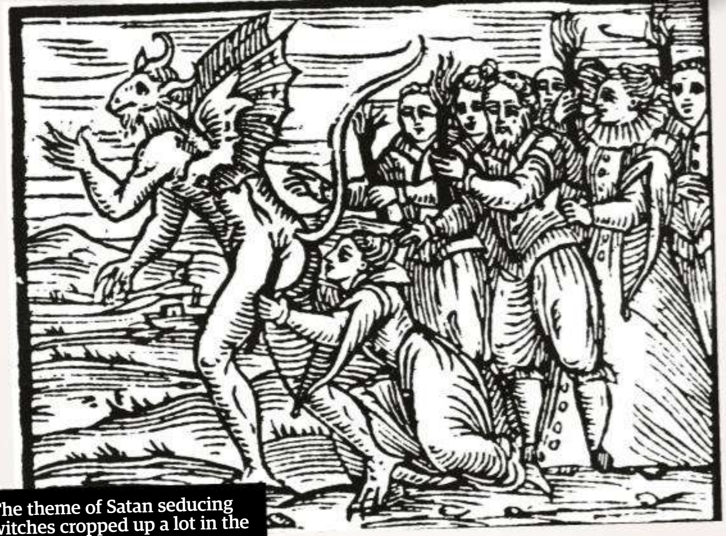
The first victim of the North Berwick witch trials, which culminated in 70 executions, Agnes Sampson was accused and found guilty of witchcraft and conspiring to harm the king and queen.

It all began on Halloween night, when Sampson attended a witch's sabbat, said to be hosted by Satan himself. During this meeting, the witches used their power to generate a killer storm over the North Sea, the purpose of which was to sink the ship Queen Anne was sailing on to travel to Scotland. Although the queen had to abandon the trip, the ship managed to stay afloat.

Seeming to want another chance, Sampson is then accused of summoning another violent storm over the North Sea, this time to target the ship that King James VI was sailing on. The king was piqued by the thought of witchcraft, and would question the witches himself in the flurry of trials that took place in Scotland in 1590. In fact, James was not convinced of Sampson's guilt at first, but after her last confession, he soon changed his mind. Sampson was found guilty and garotted and burned at the stake on Castlehill.

Walpurga Hausmännin

Location: Dillingen, Germany
Year of accusation: 1587



The theme of Satan seducing witches cropped up a lot in the witch trials

Walpurga Hausmännin was a widow who had worked as a midwife for 19 years before being arrested and accused of witchcraft, vampirism and child murder. It isn't quite known where the accusations came from, but she made a series of unbelievable confessions while she was being tortured. Her supposed life of depravity began shortly after being widowed in 1556, when she arranged a tryst with a co-worker. Although he didn't show up a demon came in his place and had sex with Hausmännin.

Things obviously went well, because this demon (called Federlin) met with her again and promised her a life without poverty if she would swear herself to Satan. She did, so Ferderlin whisked her off on a flying pitchfork to Old Scratch himself, where they confirmed the contract, ate some roasted babies and engaged in sex.

Hausmännin went on to describe how Federlin gave her an ointment that she used to harm harvests, children, adults and animals. She also confessed to killing 40 children while working as a midwife, murdering them before they were baptised, sucking their blood and then eating them with other witches.

Both the Church and the imperial court found her guilty and sentenced her to death. She was paraded through the city, stopping at various points to be tortured. Over the course of five or six stops, she had both breasts, both arms and her left hand torn with irons. Upon reaching the place of execution, her right hand, which she had used to make her oath as a midwife, was cut off, after which she was burned alive at the stake and her ashes disposed of in a stream.

This tower was used as a prison for accused witches during the Fulda witch trials

Merga Bien

Location: Fulda, Germany
Year of accusation: 1603

Fulda was not an ideal place to live if you were different from the norm, and it certainly wasn't a good place for Merga Bien. For she became one of the most famous to be killed during the Fulda witch trials of 1603-05.

It's a familiar story - zealous religious figure (Prince-Abbot Balthasar von Dernbach) declares witches to be the cause of everything that's wrong and so launches a widespread hunt. Although it's slightly ironic in this case, given that Dernbach had actually been exiled because his behaviour was deemed inappropriate. His first act upon the exile being lifted was to order the hunt, to root out all ungodly activities.

Unfortunately for Bien, she was also returning to Fulda, and directly into the storm. Her return not only found a place full of fear and suspicion, she also discovered she was pregnant. This was not such big news in itself, but she had been married to her husband for 14 years without conceiving. Now that she was pregnant, the townspeople came to the only natural conclusion - the Devil made her pregnant.

Bien was arrested, forced to confess to having killed her second husband and children, a child of her current husband's employers and also that she had attended black sabbaths. She also had to confess to the pregnancy caused by Satan.

Bien was found guilty and burned at the stake in the autumn of 1603. She would become one of over 200 people accused and executed as part of the Fulda witch trials.

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James VI and the Witches

After personal experience of black magic – or so he thought – James VI of Scotland waged a vigorous war against witchcraft

The fearful abounding at this time in this country, of these detestable slaves of the Devil, the Witches or enchanters, hath moved me (beloved reader) to dispatch in post, this following treatise of mine, not in any way (as I protest) to serve for a show of my learning and ingenuity, but only (moved of conscience) to press thereby, so far as I can, to resolve the doubting hearts of many; both that such assaults of Satan are most certainly practiced, and that the instruments thereof, merit most severely to be punished."

So began the preface to a remarkable book published in Edinburgh in 1597. *Daemonologie* was remarkable for two reasons: it was a product of the most serious witch mania ever to erupt in Britain, and it was written by a reigning British monarch. What prompted the King of Scotland to venture, personally, into the campaign against black magic? There seem to be three causes that impelled him to take up his pen.

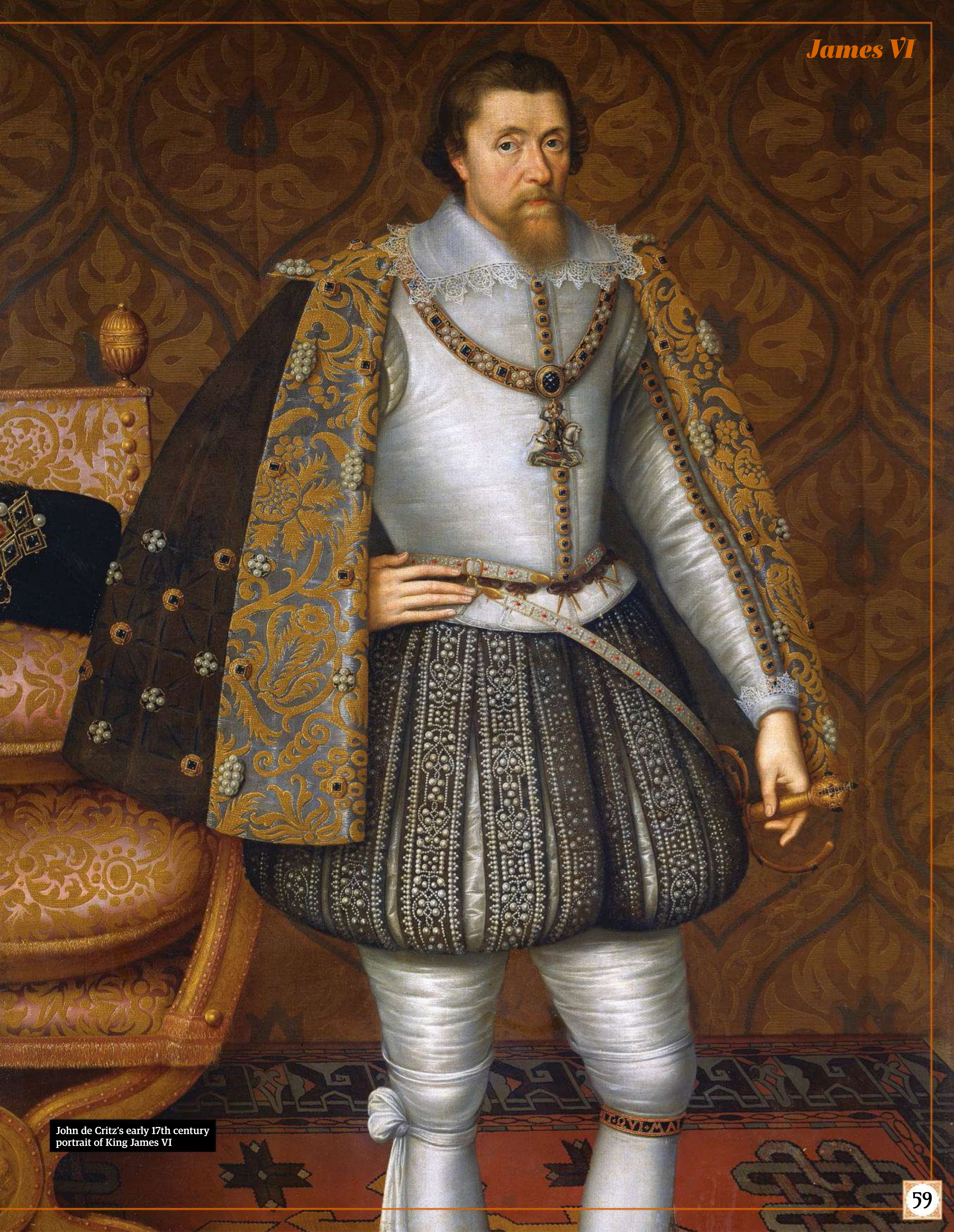
James VI of Scotland

b.1566-d.1625
♛ 1567-1625

Son of Mary, Queen of Scots and her second husband, Lord Darnley, James became king aged one after his mother was ousted. His reign was characterised by superstition. After the death of Elizabeth I of England, he became king of England in 1603.

The first and most deep-seated was James's belief in his own intellectual talent. He was a natural scholar, inquisitive, well-read and argumentative, and had a particular fascination for theology, believing that, as a king and savant, he had a responsibility to impart wisdom to his people. Secondly, he deemed himself to have been the object of a specific satanic attack in 1589, something that made a deep impression on him. Thirdly, he was always on the watch for treason and maintained that potential enemies of the crown were motivated by demonic forces.

James Stuart was King of Scotland from the age of one. His mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, was forced to abdicate in July 1567 and the boy, therefore, had no pattern of kingship on which to model himself. His upbringing was entrusted to a succession of regents from warring factions and he was subjected to a rigid educational regime by tutors of whom the chief was the gifted but irascible Presbyterian, George Buchanan. By his

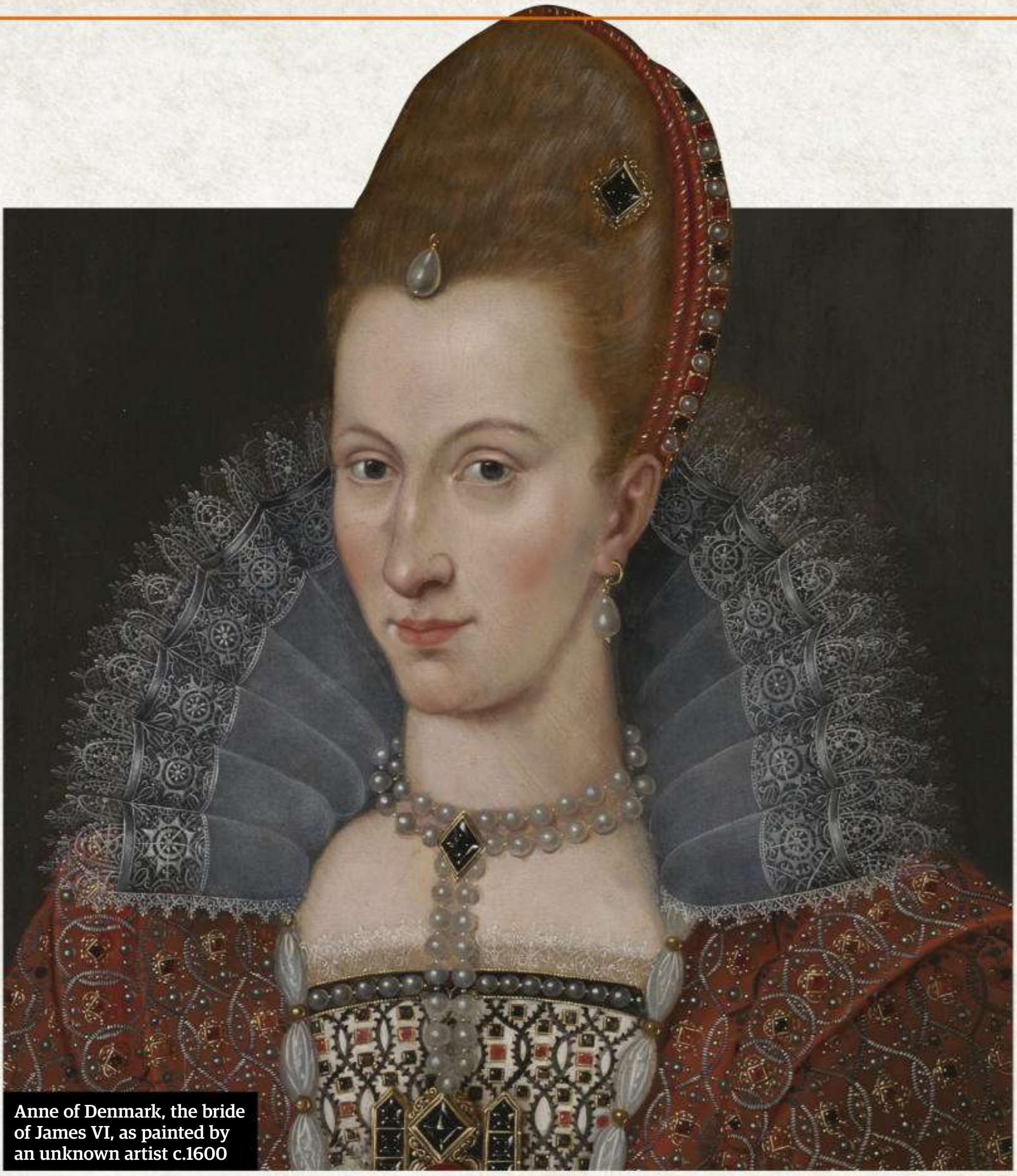


John de Critz's early 17th century portrait of King James VI mid-teens, James had mastered Latin, Greek and French and was thoroughly grounded in the Bible and Calvinist doctrine. His undoubted academic ability was coupled with a profound sense of his divine right as ruler, so his opinions had the support (as he believed) not only of reason, but also of God.

Belief in and fear of witchcraft had roots in folk religion and both Catholic and Protestant theology. For centuries in Europe, it had been generally assumed that the exponents of magic were divided into two groups: there were wise women and men (wise-ards or wizards) who were experts in herbal remedies and practised benign 'white' magic, and those who turned to maleficium, black magic, which brought misfortune on its victims. Then, in the 1480s, the situation changed drastically. The Catholic Church, increasingly embroiled in a war with heretics of various kinds, changed the definition of witchcraft. The focus was no longer on the good or bad effects produced by magical means but on the origin of the powers claimed by witches and wizards. Pope Innocent VIII decreed that such people had made a pact with Satan or his agents. If found guilty by an ecclesiastical court, these enemies of God were to be handed over to the secular authorities for execution – usually by burning in continental Europe. An officially approved handbook, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, was published, which gave details of how witches could be identified and how they should be investigated (a process including torture). Rolling off the new printing presses in great numbers, it became a bestseller and by 1600 it had gone through 28 editions. Its description of witchcraft was one of the very few topics on which Catholics and Protestants agreed during the Reformation, and the result was outbreaks of witch mania and the execution of thousands of victims, most of whom were women.

> "Leading Lutheran theologians were totally committed to the concept of spiritual warfare"

However, persecution was not universal: the British Isles was one area that largely escaped the frenzy and the *Malleus Maleficarum* was not translated into English. That is not to say that the governments in Westminster and Edinburgh were not concerned with the problem – witchcraft acts were passed in both parliaments in 1563, but the one drafted north of the border was more draconian and classed both the practice of witchcraft and the consulting of witches as capital offences. However, over the next 25 years there were few prosecutions and even fewer actual convictions. This was the situation when the complex events of 1587-91 began.


Anne of Denmark, the bride of James VI, as painted by an unknown artist c.1600

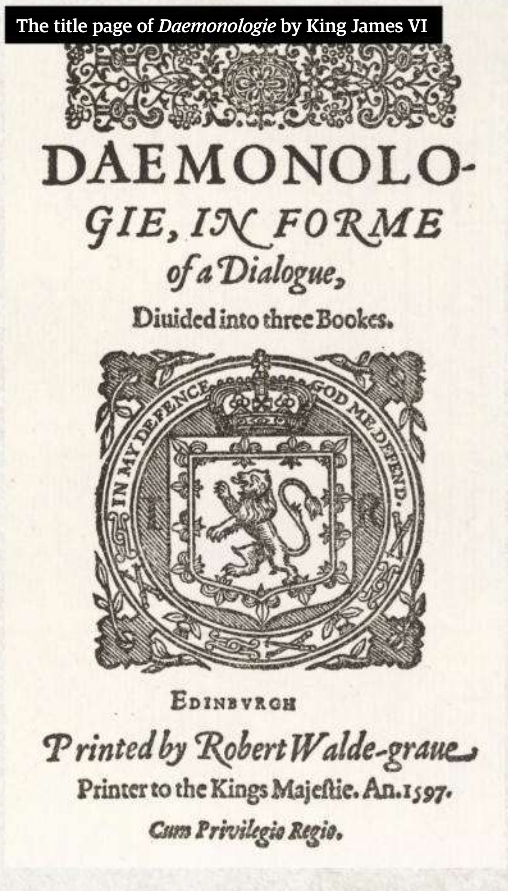
James's rule was still rendered precarious by faction fighting among the Scottish nobles. Prominent among them was Francis Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell (c.1562-1612) who, as an illegitimate son of James V, was the stepbrother of James's mother, Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary had for many years been enjoying the 'hospitality' of Elizabeth I and had been the focus of several plots against the English queen, who reluctantly ordered her execution in February 1587. Bothwell was outraged and campaigned vigorously for a war of revenge, but was indignant to discover that James had no taste for such a conflict.

In the following year, the earl saw another opportunity for his anti-English policy: the Spanish Armada, having failed to invade England, was being forced north, around the Scottish coast. James appointed Bothwell to the post of Lord Admiral with instructions to attack the Spanish vessels, but the earl had other ideas. He planned

to enlist the support of King Philip's ships and men in a secondary attack on England. His plot involved raising his own armed force, alliances with Catholic nobles on both sides of the border and messages to Madrid. When the scheme fell apart, James had its ringleader imprisoned but, with remarkable, even foolhardy, forbearance, be restored Bothwell to favour in September 1589. The king had something more important to think about - he was about to marry a Danish princess. It is with the arrangements for his wedding to Anne, sister of Christian IV of Denmark, that our story takes a bizarre twist - involving witchcraft.

The 15-year-old princess set out from Copenhagen in a convoy bound for Edinburgh, but severe storms forced them to head for shelter on the Norwegian coast. There was nothing unusual about autumnal gales in this region, but James felt that he was being balked and set off in October to fetch his bride himself. He spent six months at the Danish court, where he hugely relished intellectual debate with the scholars and clergy who enjoyed royal patronage. What he encountered was what we would now consider a strange mixture of superstition and science. The leading Lutheran theologians were totally committed to the concept of spiritual warfare being waged between the forces of good and evil and had a well-developed demonology based on the Bible and the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Their understanding of witchcraft was not confined to theory. So great was the threat

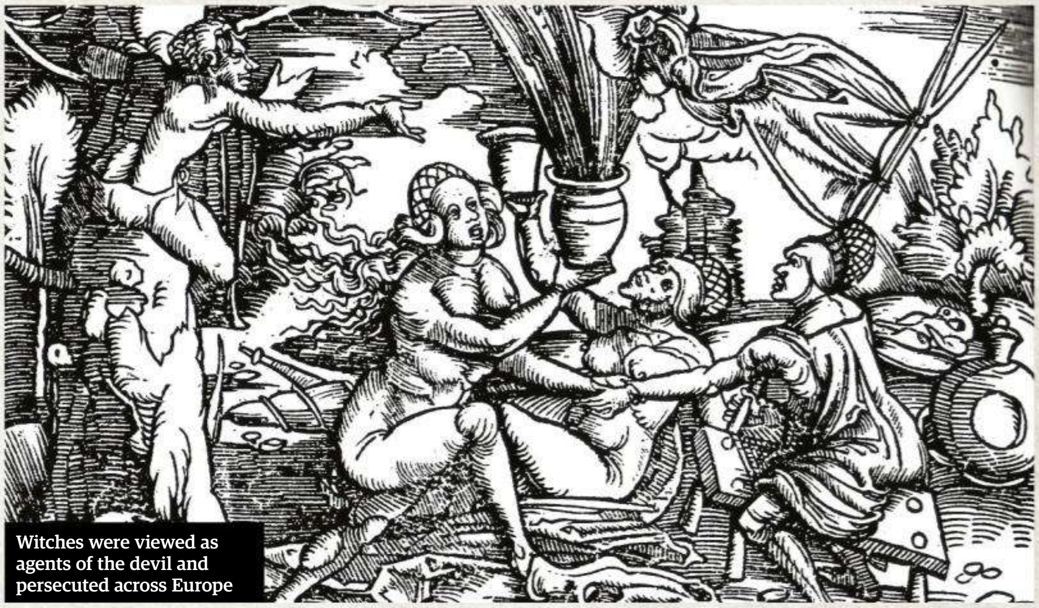
The title page of *Daemonologie* by King James VI



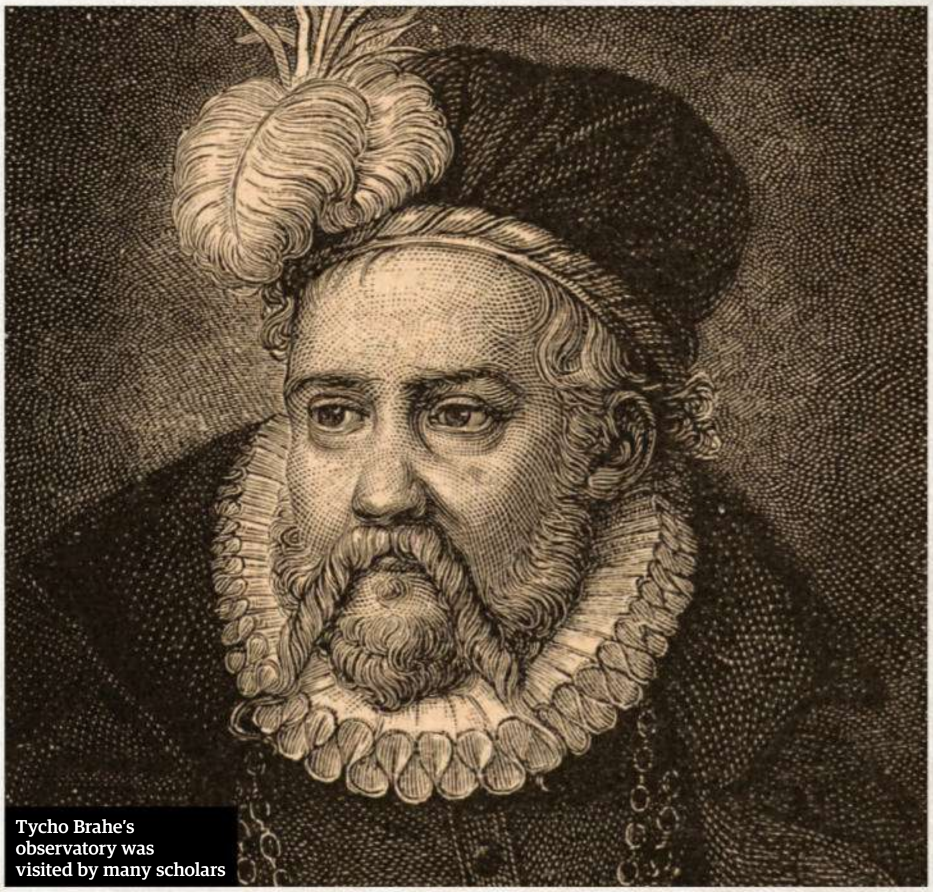
DAEMONOLO-
GIE, IN FORME
of a Dialogue,
Diuided into three Bookes.

IN MY DEFENCE GOD ME DEFEND.
I R

EDINBVRGH
Printed by Robert Walde-graue
Printer to the Kings Majeſtie. An.1597.
Cum Privilegio Regio.



Witches were viewed as agents of the devil and persecuted across Europe



Tycho Brahe's observatory was visited by many scholars

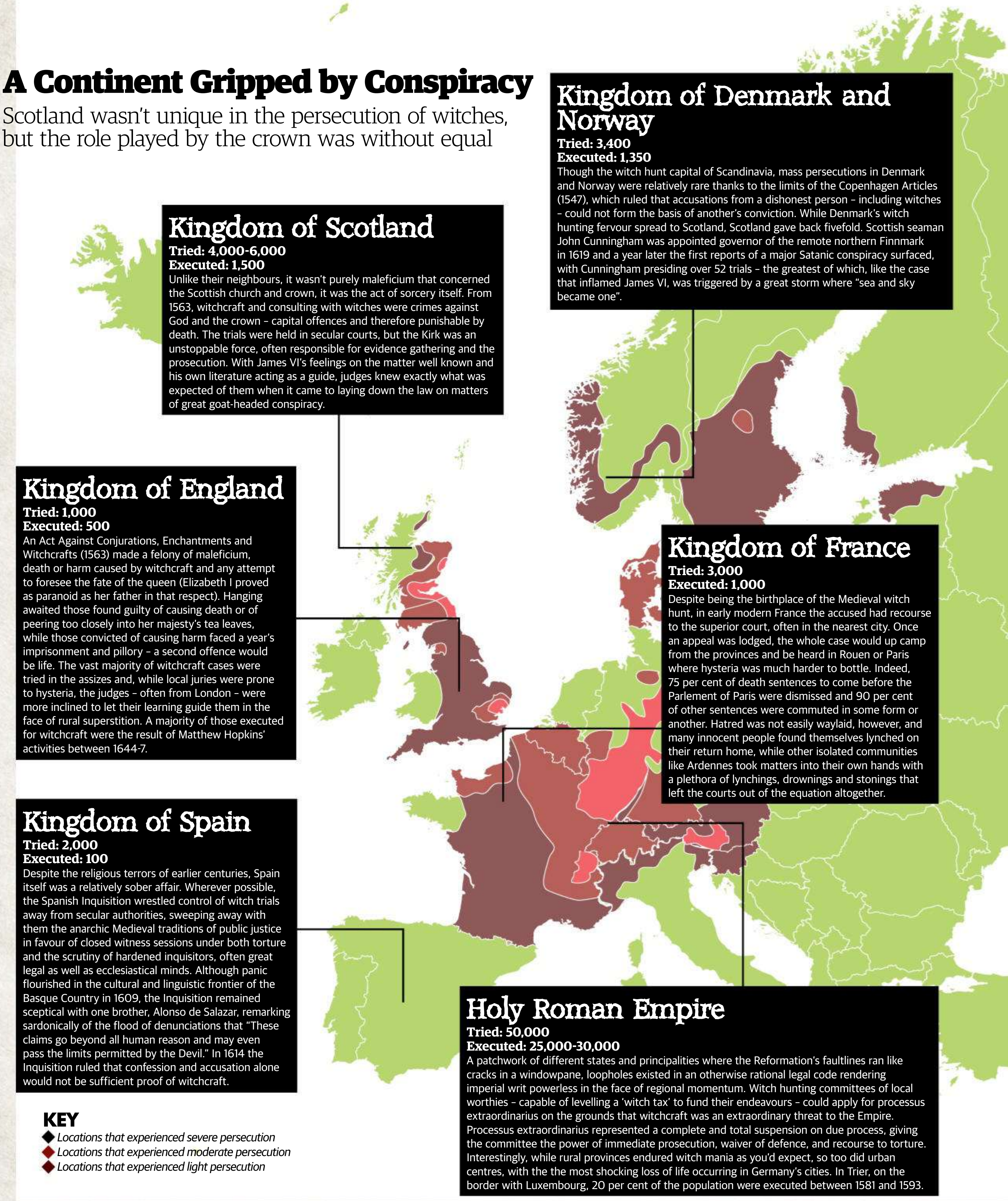
The King's Idol

Meet the man who James VI saw as his intellectual equal

James could scarcely avoid being impressed by Tycho Brahe (1546-1601). As well as being famous as one of the leading experimental scientists of the age, he was a colourful extrovert who wore a metal sheath over his nose to cover an old fencing scar, threw lavish parties and kept an elk as an indoor pet. Brahe had an elaborate research complex, which included a laboratory, an observatory, a library and a workshop for the manufacture of astronomical instruments. He made thousands of observations and calculations about the movement of heavenly bodies, which he believed important principally for the casting of accurate horoscopes. Though at the cutting edge of scientific research, Brahe was wedded to Lutheran beliefs about demonology. James must have been delighted that the opinions of this celebrity matched his own.

A Continent Gripped by Conspiracy

Scotland wasn't unique in the persecution of witches, but the role played by the crown was without equal



Kingdom of Denmark and Norway

Tried: 3,400
Executed: 1,350

Though the witch hunt capital of Scandinavia, mass persecutions in Denmark and Norway were relatively rare thanks to the limits of the Copenhagen Articles (1547), which ruled that accusations from a dishonest person – including witches – could not form the basis of another's conviction. While Denmark's witch hunting fervour spread to Scotland, Scotland gave back fivefold. Scottish seaman John Cunningham was appointed governor of the remote northern Finnmark in 1619 and a year later the first reports of a major Satanic conspiracy surfaced, with Cunningham presiding over 52 trials – the greatest of which, like the case that inflamed James VI, was triggered by a great storm where "sea and sky became one".

Kingdom of Scotland

Tried: 4,000-6,000
Executed: 1,500

Unlike their neighbours, it wasn't purely maleficium that concerned the Scottish church and crown, it was the act of sorcery itself. From 1563, witchcraft and consulting with witches were crimes against God and the crown – capital offences and therefore punishable by death. The trials were held in secular courts, but the Kirk was an unstoppable force, often responsible for evidence gathering and the prosecution. With James VI's feelings on the matter well known and his own literature acting as a guide, judges knew exactly what was expected of them when it came to laying down the law on matters of great goat-headed conspiracy.

Kingdom of England

Tried: 1,000
Executed: 500

An Act Against Conjurations, Enchantments and Witchcrafts (1563) made a felony of maleficium, death or harm caused by witchcraft and any attempt to foresee the fate of the queen (Elizabeth I proved as paranoid as her father in that respect). Hanging awaited those found guilty of causing death or of peering too closely into her majesty's tea leaves, while those convicted of causing harm faced a year's imprisonment and pillory – a second offence would be life. The vast majority of witchcraft cases were tried in the assizes and, while local juries were prone to hysteria, the judges – often from London – were more inclined to let their learning guide them in the face of rural superstition. A majority of those executed for witchcraft were the result of Matthew Hopkins' activities between 1644-7.

Kingdom of France

Tried: 3,000
Executed: 1,000

Despite being the birthplace of the Medieval witch hunt, in early modern France the accused had recourse to the superior court, often in the nearest city. Once an appeal was lodged, the whole case would up camp from the provinces and be heard in Rouen or Paris where hysteria was much harder to bottle. Indeed, 75 per cent of death sentences to come before the Parlement of Paris were dismissed and 90 per cent of other sentences were commuted in some form or another. Hatred was not easily waylaid, however, and many innocent people found themselves lynched on their return home, while other isolated communities like Ardennes took matters into their own hands with a plethora of lynchings, drownings and stonings that left the courts out of the equation altogether.

Kingdom of Spain

Tried: 2,000
Executed: 100

Despite the religious terrors of earlier centuries, Spain itself was a relatively sober affair. Wherever possible, the Spanish Inquisition wrestled control of witch trials away from secular authorities, sweeping away with them the anarchic Medieval traditions of public justice in favour of closed witness sessions under both torture and the scrutiny of hardened inquisitors, often great legal as well as ecclesiastical minds. Although panic flourished in the cultural and linguistic frontier of the Basque Country in 1609, the Inquisition remained sceptical with one brother, Alonso de Salazar, remarking sardonically of the flood of denunciations that "These claims go beyond all human reason and may even pass the limits permitted by the Devil." In 1614 the Inquisition ruled that confession and accusation alone would not be sufficient proof of witchcraft.

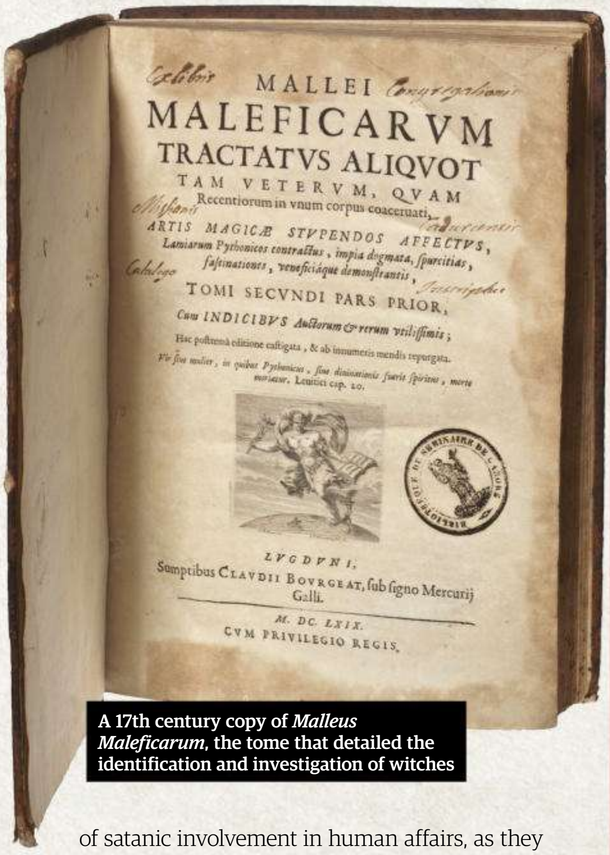
Holy Roman Empire

Tried: 50,000
Executed: 25,000-30,000

A patchwork of different states and principalities where the Reformation's faultlines ran like cracks in a windowpane, loopholes existed in an otherwise rational legal code rendering imperial writ powerless in the face of regional momentum. Witch hunting committees of local worthies – capable of levelling a 'witch tax' to fund their endeavours – could apply for processus extraordinarius on the grounds that witchcraft was an extraordinary threat to the Empire. Processus extraordinarius represented a complete and total suspension on due process, giving the committee the power of immediate prosecution, waiver of defence, and recourse to torture. Interestingly, while rural provinces endured witch mania as you'd expect, so too did urban centres, with the the most shocking loss of life occurring in Germany's cities. In Trier, on the border with Luxembourg, 20 per cent of the population were executed between 1581 and 1593.

KEY

◆ *Locations that experienced severe persecution*
◆ *Locations that experienced moderate persecution*
◆ *Locations that experienced light persecution*



Exlibris MALLEI Congregationis
MALEFICARVM
TRACTATVS ALIQVOT
TAM VETERVM, QVAM
Recentiorum in vnum corpus coaceruati,
ARTIS MAGICÆ STVPENDOS AFFECTVS,
Lamiarum Pythonicos contractus, impia dogmata, ſpurcitias,
faſcinationes, veneficiáque demonſtrantis,
TOMI SECVNDI PARS PRIOR,
Cum INDICIBVS Auctorum & rerum vtiliſſimis;
Hac poſtremà editione caſtigata, & ab innumeris mendis repurgata.
Vir ſiue mulier, in quibus Pythonicus, ſiue diuinationis fuerit ſpiritus, morte
moriatur. Leuitici cap. 20.

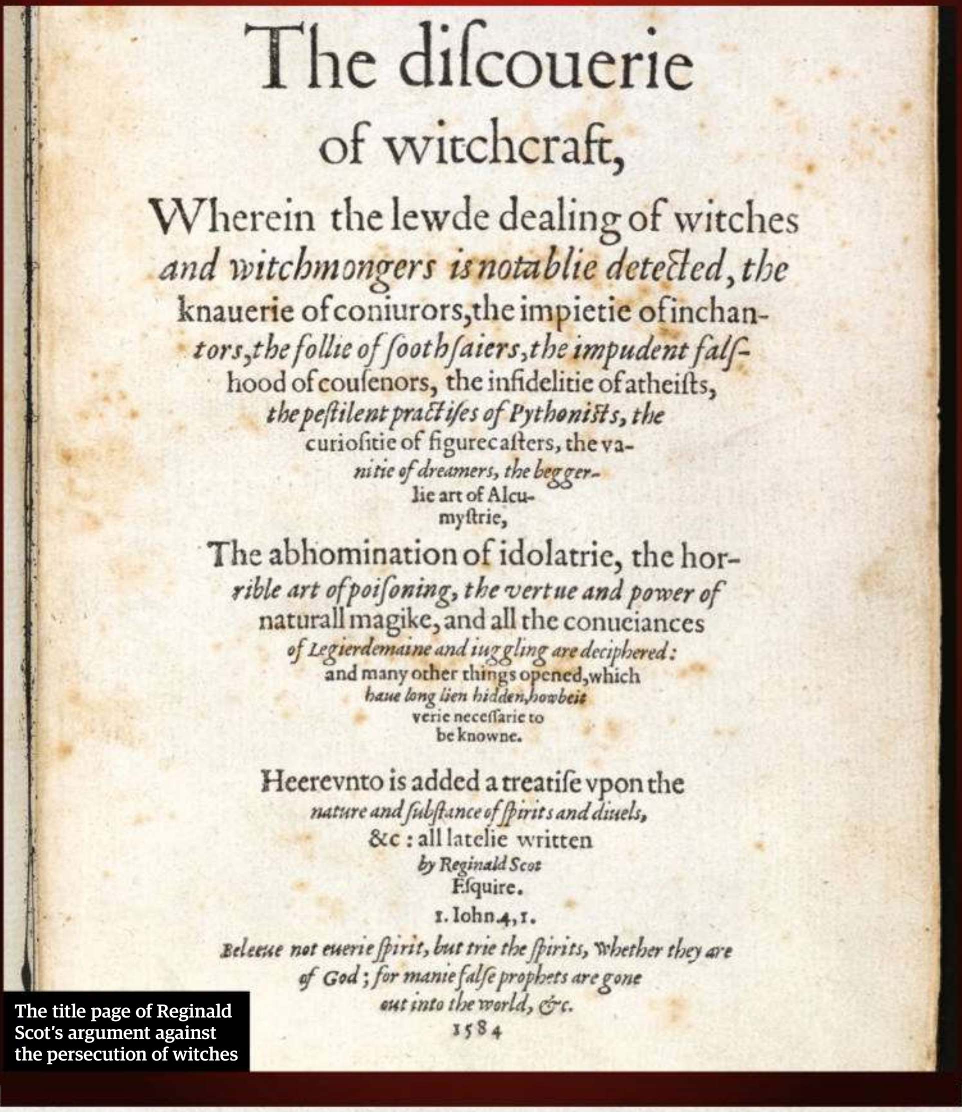
LVGDVNI,
Sumptibus CLAVDII BOVRGEAT, ſub ſigno Mercurij
Galli.
M. DC. LXIX.
CVM PRIVILEGIO REGIS.

A 17th century copy of *Malleus Maleficarum*, the tome that detailed the identification and investigation of witches

The Witch Redeemer

Not everyone supported the idea of witch hunting

Reginald Scot (c.1538-1599) is one of the many 'solid' citizens of independent but quiet demeanour who formed the backbone of Tudor England. He was a landowner with modest estates in Kent, did his stint as a Justice of the Peace and served as an MP for New Romney in the Armada year. He wrote two books, both remarkable for being well-informed and commonsensical. The first (1576) was a manual on hop-growing, but his more original work was *The Discoverie Of Witchcraft Wherein The Lewd Dealing Of Witches And Witchmongers Is Notablie Detected* (1584). Scot was appalled by the persecution of supposed witches and set out to prove from a variety of authorities, ancient and contemporary, that belief in 'magic' was contrary to scripture and reason. As well as denouncing witch trials, his book provided a compendious list of common beliefs and practices involving spells, alchemy and fraud, as well as the behaviour of witches. Small wonder that King James found Scot's work pernicious.



The diſcouerie
of witchcraft,
Wherein the lewde dealing of witches
and witchmongers is notablie detected, the
knauerie of coniurors, the impietie of inchan-
tors, the follie of ſoothſaiers, the impudent falſ-
hood of couſenors, the infidelitie of atheiſts,
the peſtilent practiſes of Pythoniſts, the
curioſitie of figurecaſters, the va-
nitie of dreamers, the begger-
lie art of Alcu-
myſtrie,
The abhomination of idolatrie, the hor-
rible art of poiſoning, the vertue and power of
naturall magike, and all the conueiances
of Legierdemaine and iuggling are deciphered:
and many other things opened, which
haue long lien hidden, howbeit
verie neceſſarie to
be knowne.

Heerevnto is added a treatiſe vpon the
nature and ſubſtance of ſpirits and diuels,
&c: all latelie written
by Reginald Scot
Eſquire.
1. Iohn 4, 1.
Beleeue not euerie ſpirit, but trie the ſpirits, whether they are
of God; for manie falſe prophets are gone
out into the world, &c.
1584

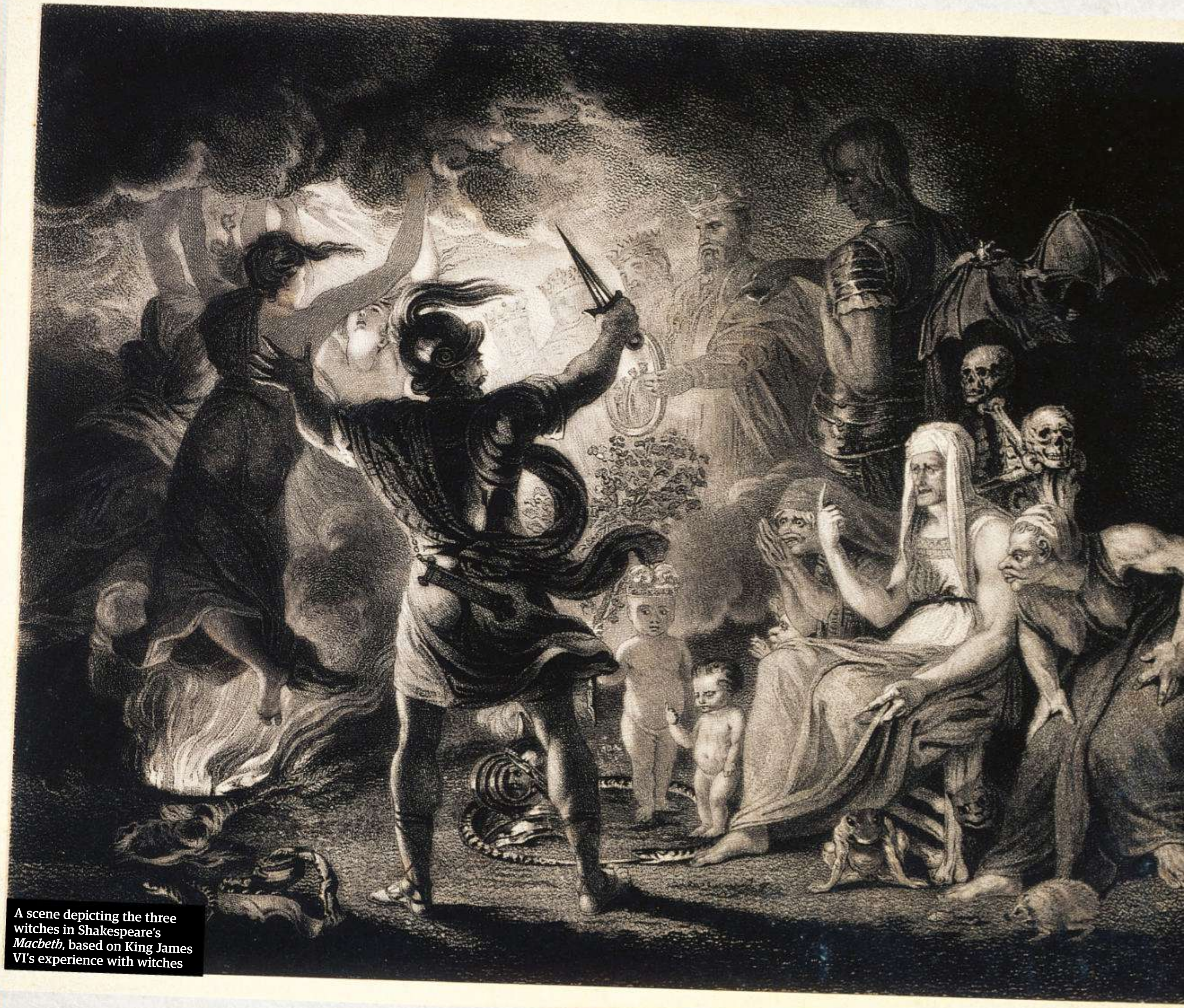
The title page of Reginald Scot's argument against the persecution of witches

of satanic involvement in human affairs, as they believed, that they were ever on the watch for people who had made a pact with the devil.

Also present at the Danish court were free-thinking philosopher-scientists, foremost among whom was the royal astrologer, Tycho Brahe, who was at the forefront of European study of the movement of heavenly bodies. James, who regarded himself as an academic, was in his element among some of the sophisticated leaders of European thought. He integrated his new insights into his inherited pattern of belief and thought to form a philosophy of his own.

Fundamental to his understanding of sovereignty was his conviction that kings were God's anointed representatives. It followed, therefore, that those who opposed the king opposed God and were thus agents of the devil - an idea that applied to treason and also to witchcraft. James now "saw clearly" that the storms that had stopped Anne's voyage to Scotland had been whipped up by those wielding satanic power, a view that was confirmed when his own return home in May 1590 was also hampered by foul weather. Whether he would have taken any action on his own initiative is not clear but, within weeks, news arrived from Denmark that made up his mind for him. The political situation there was similar to the one that had existed a few years earlier in Scotland: squabbling nobles governing the country in the name of an underage king. In the summer of 1590, the chief minister was charged by his rivals with various offences, including endangering the life of Princess Anne by sending her to sea in a poorly equipped ship. He countered by asserting that the near shipwreck had been caused by witches, leading to the arrest of several women and the eventual execution of at least a dozen of them. Under torture, some told their interrogators what they wanted to hear. However, some, if the records are to be believed, needed no pressure to confess to the most bizarre activities and the possession of arcane powers. They enjoyed the celebrity of being thought to have supernatural gifts and claimed to have met with Satan and received authority from him to send devils aboard the royal ships to steer them to near-disaster.

James needed no further incentive to set in motion his own witch hunt on his side of the water - this was the point at which Scottish politics and superstition came together. In his desire to discover the likely outcome of his schemes, Bothwell had resorted to witches who claimed clairvoyant gifts. When this became known to his opponents, the



A scene depicting the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, based on King James VI's experience with witches

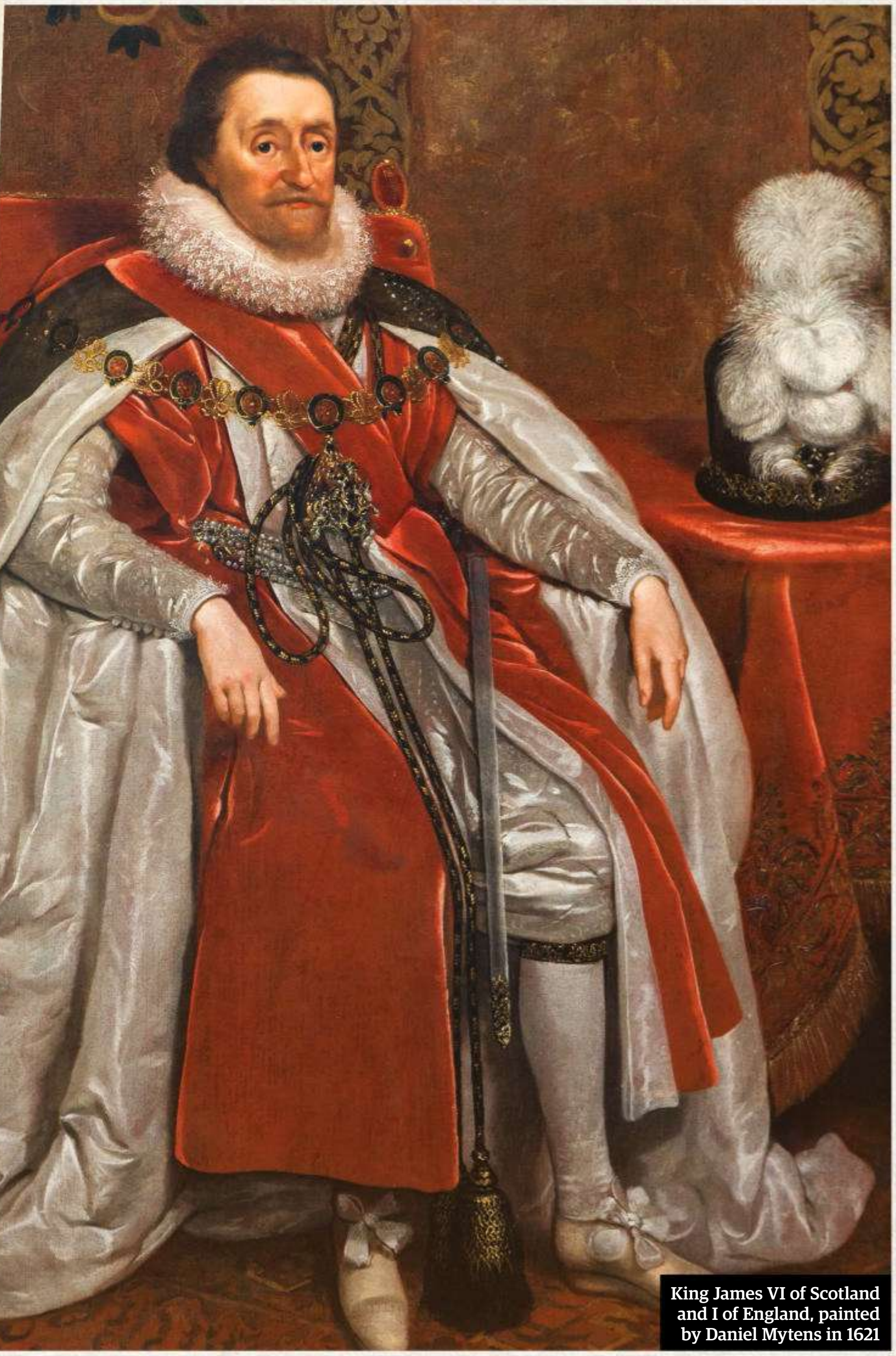
practitioners were arrested and, under examination, they accused the earl of bribing them to use their powers to kill the king by raising storms to overwhelm the royal fleet. Treason and maleficium thus merged to present James with a terrifying combination of natural and supernatural forces. Troops loyal to the king pursued Bothwell - now in open rebellion - but, despite many encounters, the earl escaped to the continent in 1595 and spent the rest of his life in exile.

Meanwhile, the more sensational aspect of the affair became the trial of a coven of witches at North Berwick. James attended some of the investigations and heard the main suspects describe their meetings with the prince of darkness. Satan, they averred, had held court in the Auld Kirk at North Berwick, sitting in the pulpit, clad in a black gown and wearing a tall black hat. His beak-like nose and glowing eyes gave him a frightening aspect and 200 of his devotees had arrived, some flying through the air, eager to do his bidding. According to the records, James was initially sceptical about all this but was convinced when, according to a contemporary report, one of the prime suspects, Agnes Sampson (later strangled and burned for her crimes), told him:

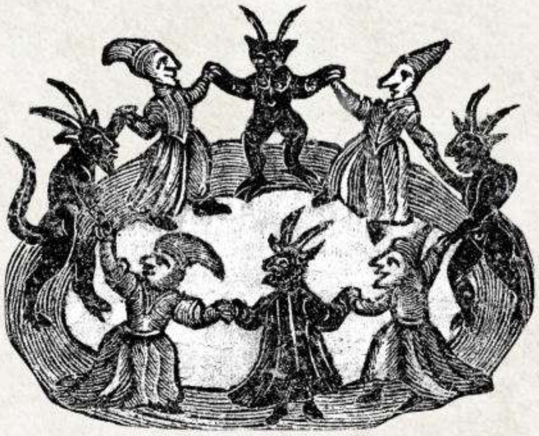
> *...the very words which passed between the King's Majesty and his Queen at Upslo in Norway the first night of marriage, with the answers each to other, whereat the King's Majesty wondered greatly, and swore by the living God, that he believed all the devils in hell could not have discovered the same, acknowledging her words to be more true, and therefore gave the more credit to the rest...*

James may also have been swayed by the flattering testimony, which, according to the accused, came directly from Satan's own mouth. When asked why his efforts to harm the king had so far proved ineffective, the archfiend replied: "He is a man of God. He does no wrong wittingly, but is inclined to all godliness, justice and virtue." This played directly to James's belief in the holy nature of his calling - there could be no greater proof of this than the testimony of God's primary adversary.

One aspect of the unspeakable tortures to which the original suspects were subjected was this 'revealing' of other offenders against the 1563 Act. Detainees turned informer in the hope of appeasing their interrogators, so that accusations and arrests rippled outward from the centre until more than



King James VI of Scotland and I of England, painted by Daniel Mytens in 1621



100 suspects had been rounded up. For all the fear engendered by these cases, it is interesting to note that juries were not always quick to deliver guilty verdicts. Equally interesting is the king's angry reaction when a witch was acquitted. Since treason and witchcraft were inextricably bound in his thinking, a lenient judgement was akin to disloyalty. He pointed out to the "misguided" jurors how close to death he had been brought by demonic agency and declared that he would continue to oppose the devil and all his works:

> *...for the good of this country, which enjoyeth peace by my life ... as I have thus begun, so propose I to go forward; not because I am James Stuart and can command so many thousands of men, but because God hath made me a king and judge to judge righteous judgement...*

True to his word, James gave his subjects the benefit of his further wisdom on witchcraft in a slender volume entitled *Daemonologie* in 1597. To the modern reader this book may seem idiosyncratic, but it very much caught the mood of the times. Only a decade earlier, an anonymous German author had regaled his readers with a cautionary tale, *Historia Von D. Johann Fausten*, about a scholar who made a pact with the devil and, at about the same time that *Daemonologie* appeared, Christopher Marlowe rendered the *Historia* into a play: *The Tragical History Of The Life And Death Of Doctor Faustus,* which was performed by the Admiral's Men. However, not everyone was caught up in the witch craze. James's principal target was Reginald Scot, a down-to-earth Kentish gentleman who, in 1584, had sought to explode the whole concept of magic in his book *The Discoverie Of Witchcraft*.

Using the device of a dialogue, the king draws upon the Bible and folklore in his exploration of the heavenly warfare of spiritual forces. But his main interest continues to be in witches, how they can be recognised and how they must be exterminated, and he has a warning for magistrates:

> *...to spare the life and not to strike when God bids strike and so severely punish ... so odious a fault and treason against God ... is not only unlawful but doubtless no less sin in that magistrate...*

On the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, the English crown was offered to James, who became monarch of both kingdoms. Thereafter, many more exciting and interesting opportunities were opened to him and he gradually abandoned his mission against witches. In 1606, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was performed at Hampton Court as a celebration of the king's Scottish ancestry, but also a nod towards his campaign against satanic activity. It is inconceivable that when three witches were introduced near the beginning of the play, James would not have recognised certain allusions in the dialogue. The crones discuss how they will attack the captain of a ship bound for Aleppo:

Second Witch: I'll give thee a wind
Third Witch: And I another
First Witch: I myself have all the other.
And the very ports [from which] they blow ...
I'll drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid ...
Weary seven nights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine.
Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tossed ...

© Alamy

Witch Hunting

The witch hunters of early modern Europe and America saw thousands tortured and sentenced to death, but what was a witch hunt and why did this notorious practice happen?

Written by James Hoare

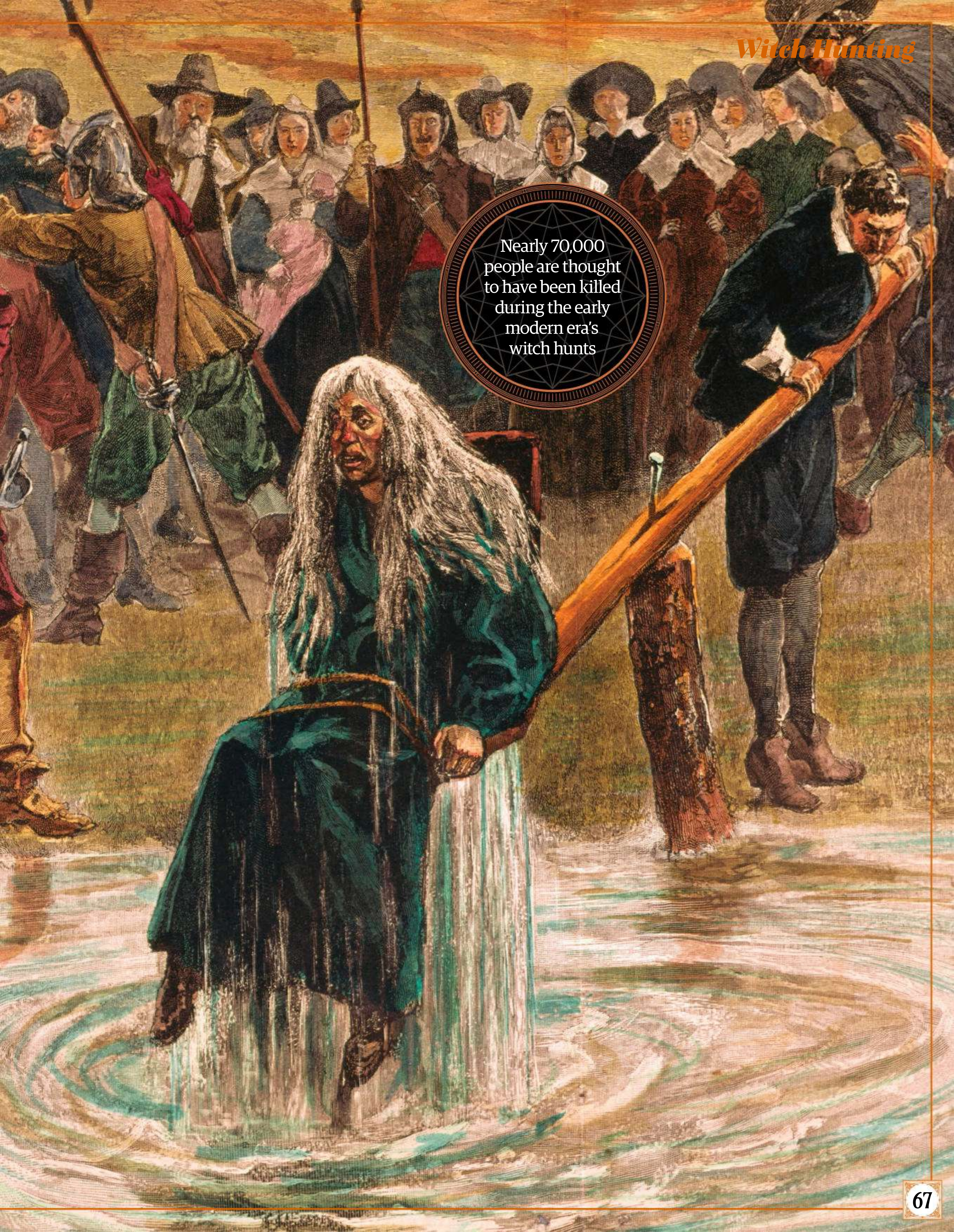
Imagine for a few minutes you're a peasant in 17th-century Europe; a widow who lives in the small abode your husband left in his will. You tend a small plot of land on which you grow a number of root vegetables as well as a few herbs that have traditional medicinal properties. You're a God-fearing woman who attends church as regularly as your old bones allow and you believe in the Devil even if you don't put much stock in the stories of witches who attend to Satan in the woods at night, smearing their backs with 'Devil's ointment' and putting hexes on valuable livestock.

Recently you've seen people from your community being led away by the bishop's men to the courthouse, accused of witchcraft, if the village gossip is to be believed. You don't think you have anything to fear. That is, until armed men garbed in the bishop's colours turn up at your house one morning to take you away for questioning. You comply without so much as a word of verbal resistance; it's all a mistake, of course. This will soon be cleared up, you think, as you're taken through the village's main thoroughfare, past the houses of friends and neighbours who peer suspiciously at you from their houses. You feel embarrassed at first but then remember assuming that the miller's wife, who had been taken away in this manner too, was found guilty of witchcraft. That's when you start to feel afraid and begin fearing for your life.

The courthouse room is presided over by three judges with a clerk who takes the proceedings. Your name is added to the record before the accusations against you are laid out by the court: your neighbour, whom you've known for many years, has reported you to the church authorities for turning her cow's milk sour. She and her farmer husband have accused you of bringing the unseasonable wet weather that caused their harvest to fail and stirring carnal desires in their two maiden daughters, with love potions made from your herbs. You have no need for a lawyer or representation of any kind in this court, you're told, as witchcraft is deemed to be an exceptional crime in which God will defend the innocent.

Of course, you deny being a witch and all wrongdoing. It's absurd, you say, you've never seen eye to eye with your neighbours, who might just be mean enough to accuse you of witchcraft to get rid of you. Your denial is noted but the court considers witchcraft an extremely serious crime, so offers you clemency in return for a full confession. You stand firm and deny the charges, so are taken below to the cells for further questioning. Here, an appointed magistrate has you stripped and searched for magical charms concealed on your body. Your thumb is placed in a vice-like device

Image Source ✱ Corbis.



Nearly 70,000 people are thought to have been killed during the early modern era's witch hunts

Witch hunting worldwide

New England

1662

Salem gets its due share of notoriety, although witch hunting had been going on for decades. The Hartford, or Connecticut witch trials, went on for several years and proved an interesting case of the witch-court's rationale.

Scotland

1715

Kate Nevin had the unfortunate distinction of being the last witch to be executed in Scotland. She was hunted for three weeks before she was caught and burned to death.

England

1612

The Pendle Hill witch trials, one of the most infamous witch hunts in English history, saw ten people executed for murders as a part of their supposed satanic rituals.

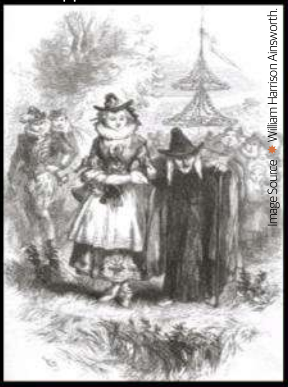


Image Source ✱ William Harrison Ainsworth.

Denmark

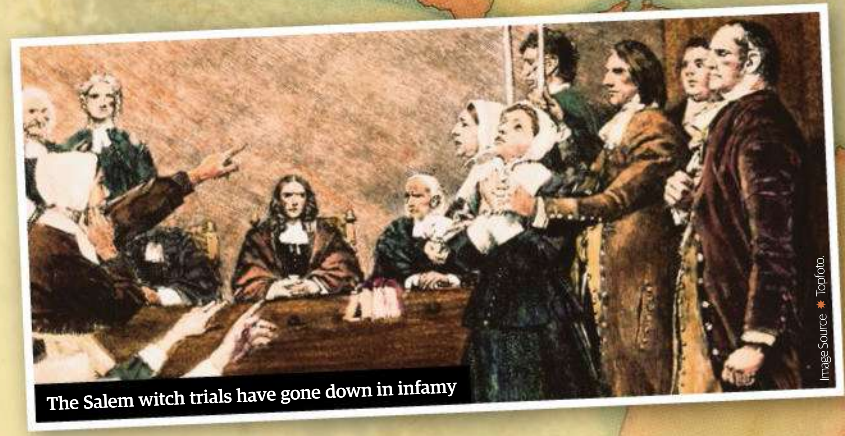
1590

The Protestant king James VI of Scotland (later to be king James I of England) was beset by bad weather when he made the crossing to meet his betrothed, Anne of Denmark. It was blamed on a coven, who were promptly tried and executed.

Zambia

1935

'Witchfinders' called the Bamucapi roamed the villages of the Bemba people, stirring up fear and putting those who fell under suspicion on trial.



The Salem witch trials have gone down in infamy

Image Source ✱ Topfoto.

> "Pagan Roman law looked to witchcraft as a source of many of the civilisation's ills"

and pressure applied as, once again, you're asked if you will confess to being a witch. You survive this first day of questioning without buckling under excruciating pain, only to fall foul of the torturer's rack. As the lever turns and your limbs splay, then pop, your eyes roll in agony – a sure sign that you seek Satan's aid. A confession is ultimately extricated and you're sent on a cart along with five other witches to a pyre the very next day, where you burn to death.

Witch hunting didn't start in the Reformation period but it's here that history remembers it best: between the tectonic struggle of the mighty Catholic and Protestant churches, striving to purge their flock of heresy and prove unassailable piety over the rival faith, anyone from low-born to noble could be next in line to be crushed. Only those from the highest echelons of society were safe. So how did this seemingly insane state of affairs first begin?

Much of what couldn't be explained by science in early recorded history was put down to 'magic', a means for ancient societies to understand, if not influence or control the world around them. Ancient Egyptians practised magic alongside more traditional medicine to promote health, protect themselves from evil spirits and communicate with their gods. The ancient Greeks used magic wands and symbols in all aspects of medicine and religion, while the Mesopotamians (what is now a large part of the Middle-East) recorded magical spells on clay tablets. Magic was generally indistinct from religion in many civilisations at

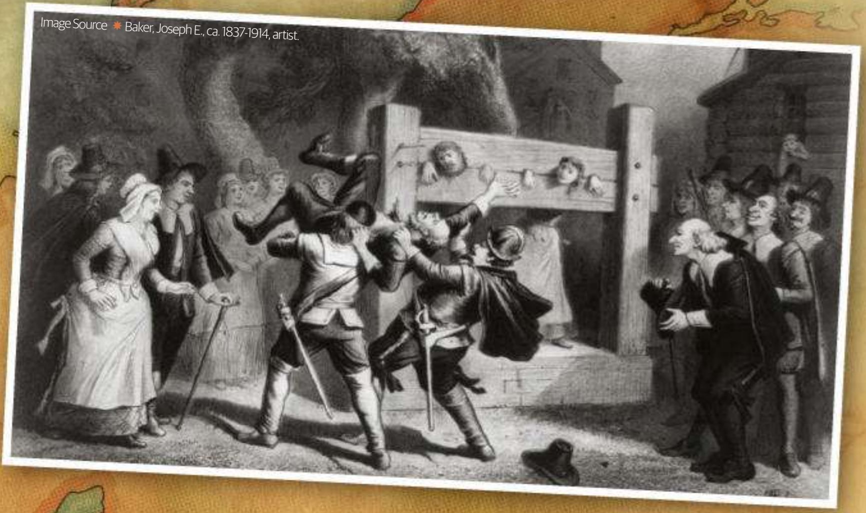


Image Source * Baker, Joseph E., ca. 1837-1914, artist.

India

2011

Superstition and belief in witchcraft is still held in many parts of the developing world. In India, three people in their sixties were attacked and killed by a lynch mob for allegedly practising black magic.

Saudi Arabia

Present day

Sorcery is treated with as draconian a punishment as blasphemy by the Saudi authorities. Those convicted of practising witchcraft (usually women) are invariably beheaded.

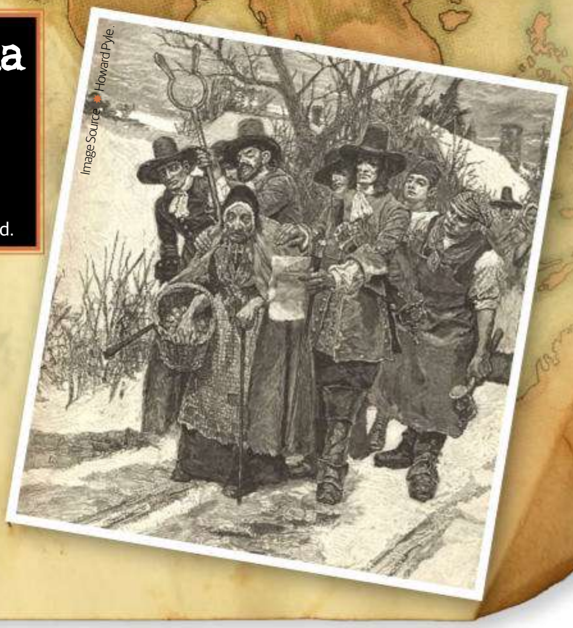
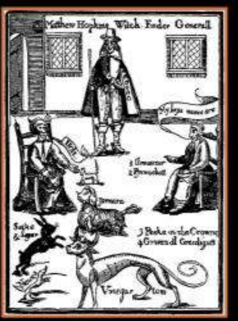


Image Source * Howard Pyle

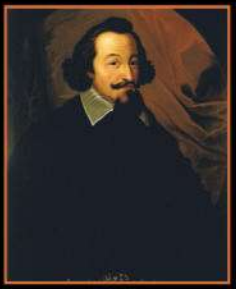
WHO WERE THE WITCH HUNTERS?

The Witch-Finder General England



Matthew Hopkins, the self-titled 'Witch-Finder General', was an English witch hunter who was active from 1644-1647, during which time he was responsible for the execution of 300 convicted witches. He introduced many witch tests that could be considered farcical if it weren't for their dire consequences. His work was sanctioned by Parliament, but he quickly gained a bad reputation for his methods. After his death, he became the bogeyman of his own vile story. His real legacy, however, was his book *The Discovery of Witches*, which gained traction in the colonies of late 17th-century America, especially in a certain community called Salem…

Prince-Bishop of Wurzburg Germany



With blue-bloods and the Pope behind him, Philipp Adolf von Ehrenberg was a powerful man in what is now southern Germany. A staunch anti-Protestant, his zeal for the eradication of witchcraft was matched only by his pursuit of the Catholic reclamation of Bavaria. With that in hand by the end of the 1620s, his focus turned to witches within his jurisdiction. No one was safe: his mass trials saw everyone from peasants to nobles dragged before the court and tried, if not convicted. In the eight years of his reign, over 900 people were burned at the stake, including devout priests, his own nephew and even children as young as three years old.

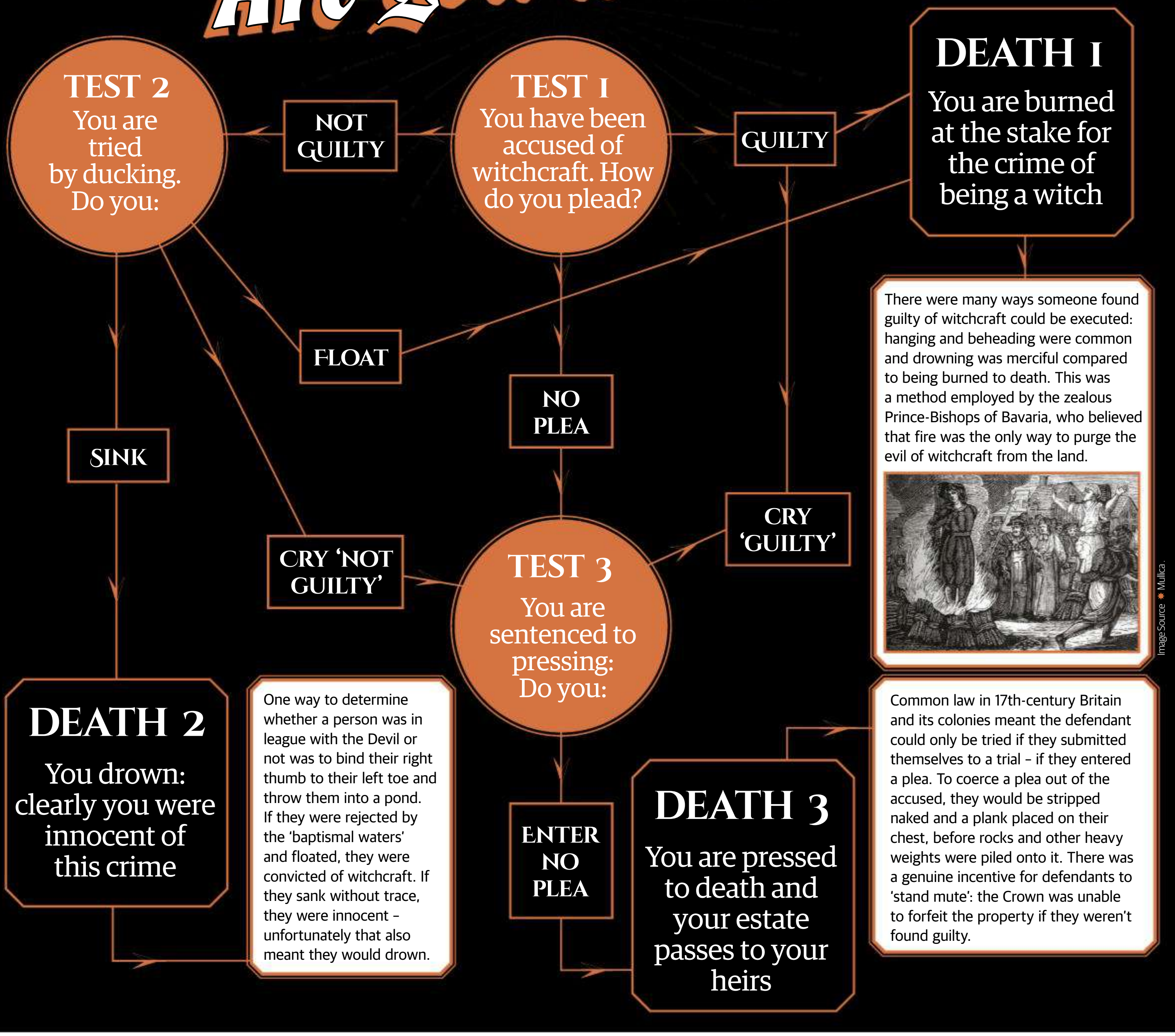
this time, with the exception of Rome, where from 438 BCE onward practising magic, much like being a Christian, was made a crime punishable by death. Pagan Roman law looked to witchcraft as a source of many of the civilisation's ills, particularly epidemics and bad harvests. Over the course of several centuries thousands were executed.

In the centuries leading from antiquity to the witch hunting boom, those in power considered witchcraft a silly superstition as frequently as a dangerous threat to society. The 8th-century Christian king of Italy, Charlemagne, scoffed at the belief in witchcraft and actually ordered the death penalty for those who pursued the burning of witches. Similarly, the 11th-century Danish court under King Harold considered the belief in witchcraft more dangerous than witchcraft itself and gave severe punishments to witch hunters.

Through the Middle Ages, witchcraft was mostly tolerated or merely scoffed at and infrequently punished, often with a less punitive jail term or fine, depending on what the witch was accused of. This changed in the 12th century when the Roman Catholic Inquisition was formed, initially to tackle secular faiths that had split off from the church and threatened the power in Rome. The early 14th century saw the Inquisition expand its remit and occasionally deal with users of magic where a sect had adopted witchcraft as a part of its doctrine, such as the Cathars of France – a dualist, Gnostic sect that Rome decried as a church of Satan for its belief in a deity of both good and evil respectively.

By the late Middle Ages, it had become increasingly perilous to openly practise anything but the Catholic faith. Shortly following a Papal bill issued by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 that explicitly condemned Devil-worshippers who had slain infants, two inquisitors were authorised to investigate witchcraft in Germany. They were Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, who were quick to yoke a new invention, the printing press, and publish what would become an infamous and influential tome on dealing with witchcraft and witches: the Malleus Maleficarum – Hammer of Witches. This treatise sought to reinforce the

Are you a witch?



TEST 1
You have been accused of witchcraft. How do you plead?

NOT GUILTY

GUILTY

NO PLEA

TEST 2
You are tried by ducking. Do you:

FLOAT

SINK

CRY 'NOT GUILTY'

DEATH 1
You are burned at the stake for the crime of being a witch

There were many ways someone found guilty of witchcraft could be executed: hanging and beheading were common and drowning was merciful compared to being burned to death. This was a method employed by the zealous Prince-Bishops of Bavaria, who believed that fire was the only way to purge the evil of witchcraft from the land.

Image Source ✶ Mullica.

CRY 'GUILTY'

TEST 3
You are sentenced to pressing: Do you:

ENTER NO PLEA

DEATH 2
You drown: clearly you were innocent of this crime

One way to determine whether a person was in league with the Devil or not was to bind their right thumb to their left toe and throw them into a pond. If they were rejected by the 'baptismal waters' and floated, they were convicted of witchcraft. If they sank without trace, they were innocent – unfortunately that also meant they would drown.

DEATH 3
You are pressed to death and your estate passes to your heirs

Common law in 17th-century Britain and its colonies meant the defendant could only be tried if they submitted themselves to a trial – if they entered a plea. To coerce a plea out of the accused, they would be stripped naked and a plank placed on their chest, before rocks and other heavy weights were piled onto it. There was a genuine incentive for defendants to 'stand mute': the Crown was unable to forfeit the property if they weren't found guilty.

existence of witchcraft, educate officials in finding and prosecuting it and to lay the burden of its evils on women. It was widely read but within a few years the Catholic Church had distanced itself from the book, primarily because it had become popular with the secular faiths it sought to exterminate. But with the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, the book and its ilk became the linchpin for the witch hunting boom, as the Protestant church endorsed these tomes precisely because they were outlawed by the Vatican.

As the creation of Protestant churches swept across Europe, witch hunting took place in earnest, encouraged by many royal houses like Denmark and Scotland. Fuelled by religious persecution, the hysteria among the people came in waves marked by a spike in executions. A witch could be accused of causing disease, death, disaster (natural or otherwise), for living in a remote location, being thought strange or foreign, or simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The motives of the accuser could be equally arbitrary, from genuine belief that a witch brought some misfortune upon the community, to even more sinister motives, such as a means of social control by the authorities or to confiscate the property of the accused. In the witch hunting boom in Scotland that lasted up until the 18th century, those practising witchcraft went from being thought superstitious crackpots to dangerous Devil-worshippers: they had sold their souls to Satan and held anti-Christian services called a witches' Sabbath. Witchcraft was legislated against in 1563 and over the course of the next 150 years or so, the 'witch-prickers' went about their business of pricking the body of a person accused of witchcraft: if they didn't bleed, it was viable evidence for the court to try them.

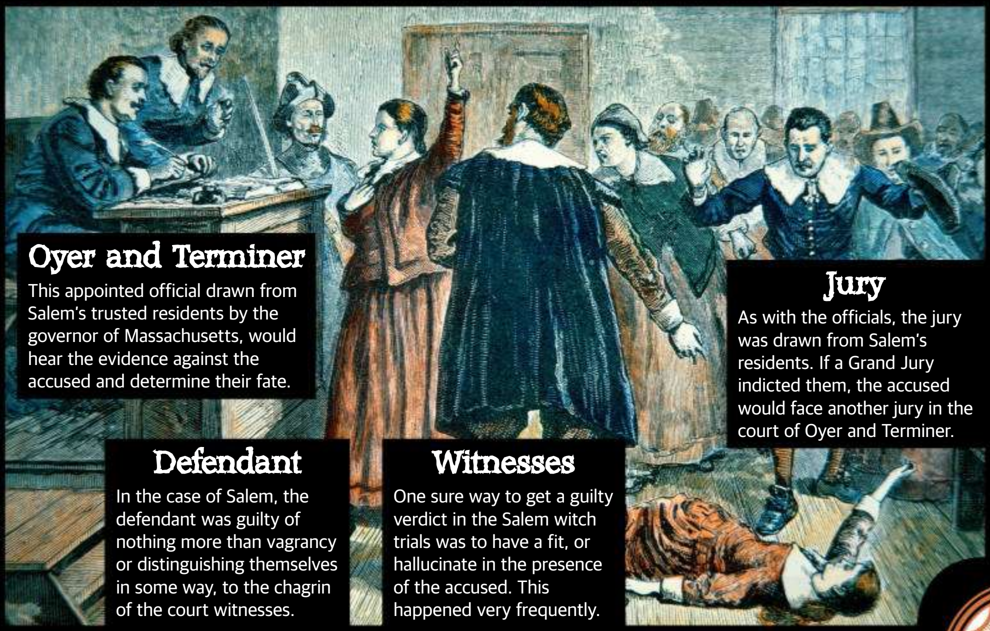
Torture was a common means of extracting information from those who weren't immediately cleared by the courts. Although the height of the witch trial era was marked by general disregard

THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS

Usually old, sometimes ugly, often female; the witch of children's fairytales still lingers as a stereotype today. Court records show that across Europe the majority of those tried as witches were women, even though white witches and cunning folk were just as likely to be men. However, as the Church became more intent on stamping out all forms of heresy, women became the main focus of witch hunts.

From the 15th century onwards women were seen as increasingly vulnerable to the temptations of magic. They were viewed as sex mad and seriously stupid by many, and clerics writing on demonology described lust-filled women who were seduced into evil by the Devil and took part in unholy orgies.

Later reformers took an equally dim view. For Martin Luther, women were so weak that they were easily won over by the promises of magic. In the 16th and 17th centuries, witches were nearly always women and any men caught in the act were usually seen to have been tempted over to darkness by a wicked woman. But when the wave of persecutions ended and witchcraft was no longer pursued through the courts, the wise folk recorded in local communities once more featured men as well as women.



Oyer and Terminer

This appointed official drawn from Salem's trusted residents by the governor of Massachusetts, would hear the evidence against the accused and determine their fate.

Jury

As with the officials, the jury was drawn from Salem's residents. If a Grand Jury indicted them, the accused would face another jury in the court of Oyer and Terminer.

Defendant

In the case of Salem, the defendant was guilty of nothing more than vagrancy or distinguishing themselves in some way, to the chagrin of the court witnesses.

Witnesses

One sure way to get a guilty verdict in the Salem witch trials was to have a fit, or hallucinate in the presence of the accused. This happened very frequently.

Image Source ✱ Getty Images.

> "Torture was a common means of extracting information from those who weren't immediately cleared"

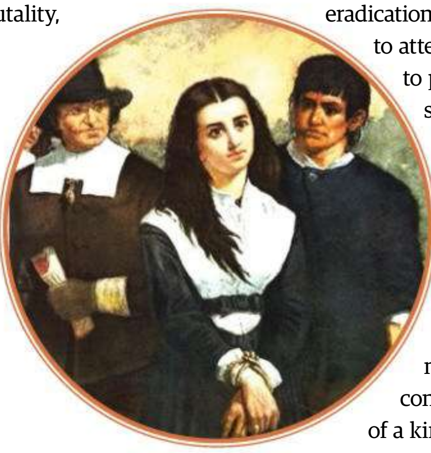


Image Source ✱ Thomas Satterwhite Noble.

for real evidence and irrational hysteria, torture wasn't a completely arbitrary practice and there was a certain method to be followed: generally speaking, the torture came in several degrees of increasing intensity and brutality, observed and recorded by a clerk. The idea was to extract a confession and have the accused repeat the confession outside of the torture: the accused was presumed guilty and often, even those convinced of their innocence would admit to anything after the prolonged agony of cruel and unusual punishments.

England brought in serious penalties for witches under the Witchcraft Act of 1542, amended in 1562 and 1604 to repeal certain statutes, such as the 'benefit of clergy', which spared anyone who could read a passage from the Bible. One of the most famous witch trials in England were of the Pendle witches in 1612, which saw ten people, mostly women, sent to the gallows. King James I was driven by Protestant theology and was particularly interested in witchcraft and its eradication. Thus, those who refused to attend the Church of England to partake in holy communion, such as the devout Catholics of the Pendle Hill region in Lancashire, immediately popped up on the radar of local Justice of the Peace Roger Nowell. Further probing by Nowell revealed that several of these local non-conformists already considered themselves witches of a kind, providing healing and potions for the community – a common trade in the 17th century. After summoning three members of the Device family, Nowell was told that the Chattox family – who competed for their trade in the potion and charm business – had murdered four men from the area. The Chattoxes were summoned and accusations and counter-accusations flew throughout the community, resulting in ten people being hanged.

Similar stories played out in the rest of Europe and its North American colonies. German heiress Merga Bien, heavily pregnant at the time, was convicted of murdering her husband by witchcraft; it was alleged that her unborn child had been fathered by the Devil. She was burned at the stake. Anna Kolding was one of several people who bore the brunt of a Danish minister looking to shift blame for under-supplying the royal ships on a journey across the North Sea. She was accused of summoning storms, found guilty, and burned.

In the 18th century, a much more rational and scientific age arrived. Pioneering astronomers and scientists like Galileo and Newton had laid the groundwork for an empirical generation who sought to verify the nature of the world by observation rather than superstition. A dim view was now taken of those who still believed in witchcraft and persecuted 'witches', and this brought with it a far less punitive culture. During the reign of George II, the Witchcraft Act of 1735 made it explicitly illegal for anyone in Britain to claim that they or anyone else had magical powers and were a witch. Other countries quickly followed suit.

Although nearly 70,000 people are thought to have been executed during the brutal witch hunts of the early modern age, only around 12,000 of these executions have been officially recorded.

Terror on Pendle Hill

During the reign of the Witch Hunter King, power, superstition and family feuds plunged the picturesque area of Pendle into turmoil that would prove most deadly

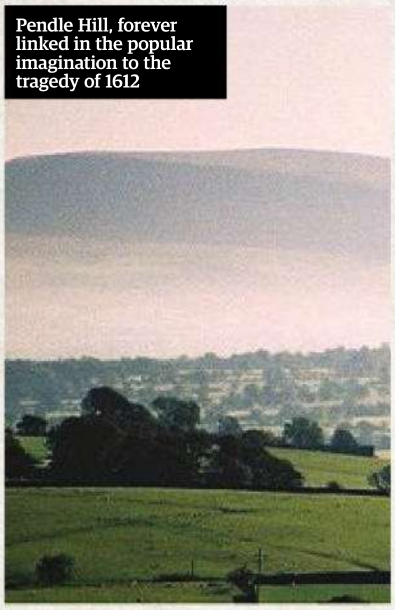
Two old crones, blind and disfigured, muttered muted incantations in the light of the moon over the forest of Pendle: cursing and curing at will, no one was safe from the dark magic that spread from their households. Friend and foe alike had much to fear from Old Demdike and Mother Chattox: who would they target next with their malicious witchcraft, and when would their reign of terror be broken?

The case of those who have come to be known as the Pendle Witches is perhaps the most well-known of all English witch trials. Resulting in the execution of ten people, the tragic events were immortalised in The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster by court clerk Thomas Potts, an account that has intrigued and horrified many across the centuries that followed. What really took place during those dark days of 1612, and what led one of the largest groups of accused witches in English history to the gallows?

The two women were also, however, greatly feared, their powers stemming, it was said, from pacts made with devils

Elizabeth Southerns - known as Old Demdike - and Anne Whittle - Mother Chattox - had long lived in the Pendle area. Now elderly and in declining health, both Demdike and Chattox were well-known to their neighbours and those of the local area for their skill with herbs and charms, often called upon to help when an animal or child sickened. The women were, however, greatly feared, their powers stemming, it was said, from pacts made with devils. For not only did they use their powers for good, but, when it suited them, they could turn them on those who displeased them with deadly consequences. Anne Nutter died soon after Chattox had taken offence at her laughing, suspecting herself to be the cause of the youthful mirth. Chattox vowed to be even with her, and the girl fell sick and

“Witchcraft was a family affair, passing by instruction down from one generation to the next”



Pendle Hill, forever linked in the popular imagination to the tragedy of 1612

Fact or Fiction?

Although Thomas Potts' contemporary account of events, *The Wonderfull Discoverie*, is the main source of information on what took place in 1612, many of the 'facts' people know about the case of the witches of Pendle actually comes from two fictionalised yet highly influential versions of the story of Demdike, Chattox and their families: the mid-19th century novel *The Lancashire Witches* by William Harrison Ainsworth and Robert Neill's later *Mist Over Pendle*.

Some of the most popular and enduring inaccuracies spawned by these two works of fiction include the idea that Alice Nutter was the high-born Lady of Roughlee Hall, the belief that Pendle Hill was central to the events that took place, and, perhaps most sensationally, that Alizon Device was actually the secret love child of Alice Nutter. Despite these delicious details being demonstrably fictional inventions, this has not harmed the popularity of both novels, and both have been widely read by several generations. So enduringly popular is Ainsworth's work in fact, that it is the only one of his forty novels to have remained permanently in print to this day. Not only that, but many have come to discover the true story of the Pendle Witches through reading these works of fiction.

died. Likewise, after Demdike had quarrelled with Richard Baldwin, his daughter had died a year later. When Demdike was asked to aid John Nutter's cow, instead of curing it, the cow had died after Demdike worked her magic.

Poor, often reduced to begging, and low down on the social and economic scale, the power gained from such dark reputations was one of the few ways such women could exert some control over their own circumstances. It little mattered that their spells and charms were merely words taken from the old Catholic prayers and rituals that were now no longer permitted under a Protestant king: people believed them to be capable of wonderful and terrible things and they played that fact to their advantage. There were some things however, that witchcraft and reputation could not protect against.

In March 1612, Demdike's granddaughter, 18 year old Alizon Device, encountered John Law, a pedlar. She asked him for some pins but, as she was unable to pay for them, the man refused her the goods. Angered, Alizon muttered a curse against him before going on her way: unbeknownst to the girl, John Law fell to the ground, managing to get to a nearby inn before collapsing in a terrible state. The man's son was sent for, and Abraham Law listened grimly as his father, finally regaining the power of speech, told him that he had been bewitched and where he could find the young woman responsible.

Child testimony was not uncommon in English witch trials: children of the accused were used to bring about their parents' downfall

The son wasted no time tracking Alizon down and taking her to the stricken pedlar's bedside: confronted with what she had done, the girl fell to her knees and begged forgiveness, admitting in this act, full culpability and the power of her curse. Matters could not end there; Abraham Law next spoke to local Justice, Roger Nowell. A man with a vested interest in both witch hunting and rooting out troublesome local elements such as Alizon's family, Nowell wasted no time in having the girl questioned.

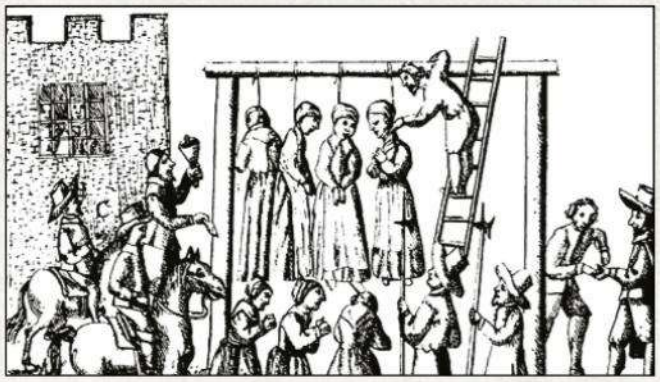
Whether terrified or put at her ease, the result was the same. Alizon spoke at length, answering in detail the questions put to her. According to Alizon, her grandmother was assuredly a witch. Not only that, but two years ago Demdike had persuaded her to share in her wicked ways and likewise turn to witchcraft. All she had to do was to let a devil

> "The Pendle trial was the first in England to successfully 'prove' the existence of witches' sabbats"

Defining moment

Demdike succumbs 1598

After resisting temptation for several years, Demdike sends a spirit on her daughter's behalf to get revenge on Richard Baldwin after he fails to pay her. Around the same time, Demdike persuades her friend, Anne Whittle, alias Chattox, to likewise turn to a life of witchcraft. Chattox initially refuses, but finally permits Tibb, the same spirit that coerced Demdike to suck at a place by her right ribs. Thus two notorious witches were born: things soon sour however as the pair come into competition with each other in the local area for their newly acquired powers.



Timeline

1592

The witchcraft begins
Demdike meets a devil named Tibb while out begging. Despite being told she could have anything she liked in return for giving him her soul, she resists, telling him that she wants nothing. **1592**

Break in at the Device Household
Linens and some meal are stolen from the Device house. Later, Chattox's daughter Bessie is seem wearing a stolen garment. The Device women take back what is theirs. **1601**

Device and Chattox make a deal
Wary of his Mother-in-law's rival, John Device agrees to pay an annual tribute to Chattox to the tune of eight pounds of meal in exchange for leaving his family alone. **1601**

Death of John Device
After paying the tribute faithfully, one year John Device fails to make payment. He falls ill and dies, naming Chattox and her witchcraft as the cause as he dies. **Date unknown**

Alizon Device meets a pedlar
Alizon meets John Law and begs some pins from him. When the request is refused she mutters angry words against the pedlar, only for him to suffer a stroke shortly afterwards. **18 March 1612**

Alizon is accused
John Law blames Alizon for his condition: she is sent for and confesses, and the pedlar's son, Abraham Law, goes to local Justice Roger Nowell to complain against her. **21 - 29 March 1612**

come to her and suck at a part of her body to seal the deal. In return, she would then have whatever she wanted. Alizon went on to reveal her belief in Demdike's part in the bewitching of John Nutter's cow, the death of Anne Nutter, and the turning of a pail of milk into butter through nefarious means.

Mother Chattox, Alizon continued, was as bad, or even worse than her grandmother; after the two families had quarrelled, her father, John Device, had been so afraid of the powers of old Chattox that he had agreed to pay a yearly tribute to the old woman in exchange for their safety. While the annual amount of meal had been given they had lived in relative peace, but the sense of security had been lamentably false: failing to pay one year, John Device had fallen ill and died, punishment, Alizon was sure, from Chattox for reneging on the arrangement. Chattox was also suspected of bewitching drink belonging to John Moore, and of bewitching one of his children to death. This was in revenge for a previous accusation from Moore against Chattox of bewitching his cattle. Alizon related how this had been done: Chattox had made a clay image of the child, drying and crumbling it in order to bring about the child's illness and eventual death. Finally, her own friend, Anne Nutter, had been bewitched to death after Chattox took offence at the girls laughing as she happened to enter the room. This was in revenge for a previous accusation from Moore against her of bewitching his cattle. It did not do to cross Mother Chattox.

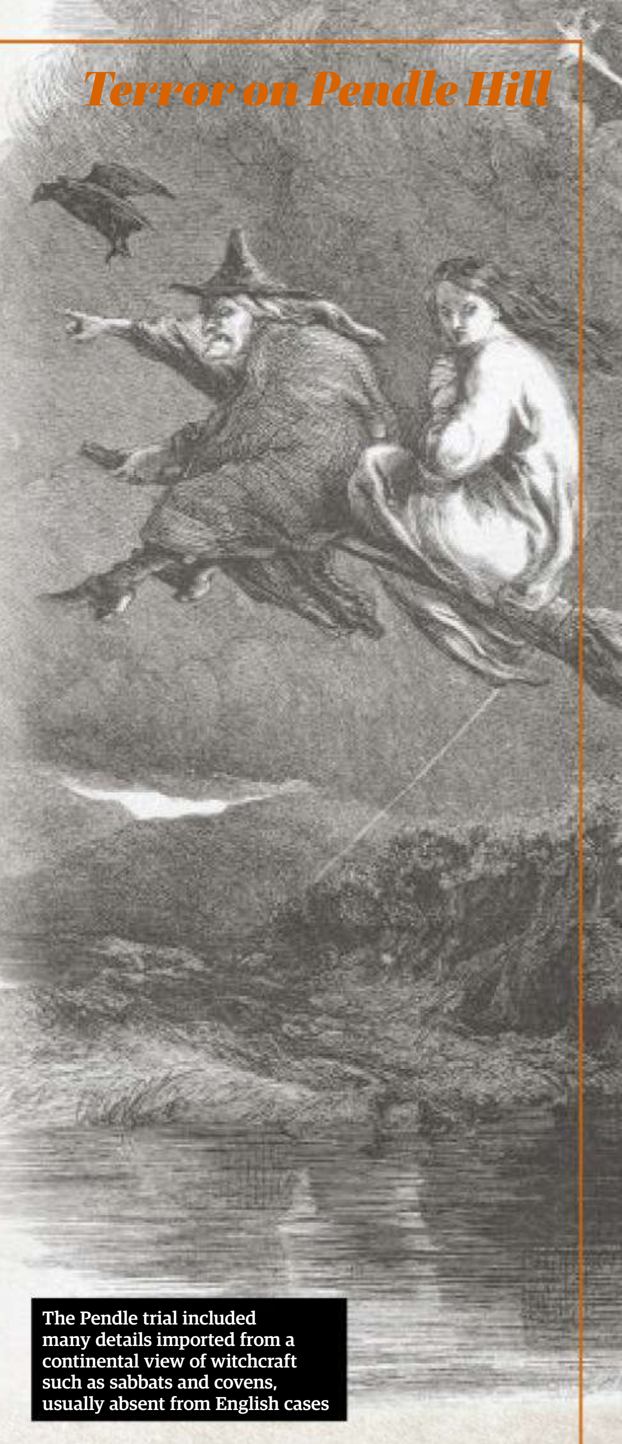
It is very likely that Alizon was asked leading questions in order to produce this wealth of damning information on her family and enemies. What promises or threats were given to her are unrecorded, but regardless, Alizon gave Nowell exactly what he expected or feared to hear.

That same day, Alizon's brother James was also questioned by Nowell, confirming that Demdike was indeed a witch and that he had not only heard terrible and frightening sounds that could have no earthly origin near his grandmother's house, but that he'd been visited in his bed by a black creature, the experience terrifying him. According to James, Alizon's encounter with the pedlar was not the first time she had been implicated in witchcraft: the previous year, she had been in trouble for bewitching the child of Henry Bullock.

On the strength of their words, a few days later the mother of Alizon and James, Elizabeth Device was questioned, and she not only incriminated herself but also Chattox and her daughter Anne Redferne. When Chattox was questioned the same day her words supported what others had already said, admitting to her role of witch and servant of the Devil. The result: Demdike, Chattox and her daughter Anne Redferne and Alizon were arrested and taken to Lancaster Castle.

The shock of the arrests hit hard, two families now missing their matriarchs. It so happened that a meeting of friends and family had already been planned before events overtook them, to take place on Good Friday at Demdike's home, Malkin Tower. One of the things apparently up for discussion was the naming of Alison's familiar spirit, something that could obviously now not occur as the unfortunate young woman was behind bars.

> Despite later fictional invention, Pendle Hill did not actually play a role in the original account of Demdike and Chattox



The Pendle trial included many details imported from a continental view of witchcraft such as sabbats and covens, usually absent from English cases

Defining moment

Meeting at Malkin Tower, Good Friday, 1612

Friends and family of those arrested meet at the house of Demdike to discuss the situation and, it is said, make plans to attack Lancaster Castle with gunpowder, murder the gaoler, and rescue the prisoners. Among those in attendance are Jennet Preston, seeking revenge against Thomas Lister for having her tried as a witch, and reputedly high-born Alice Nutter. After feasting on a sheep stolen by James Device, they depart agreeing to meet a year later for a feast, but news of the meeting reaches Nowell and further arrests are made, bringing the number of prisoners up to 12.

Defining moment

Child in Court, 18 – 19 August 1612

9 year old Jennet Device is produced in court to speak against her grandmother, mother, siblings and neighbours. Primed by Nowell or his staff in advance, the girl performs with devastating effect, listing the travesties committed by her family and identifying those who had been present at Malkin Tower, effectively condemning them all. It is unclear just what she was told to make her do so and if the girl was aware of the consequences of her words until it was too late.

1612

Alizon Device is questioned
Roger Nowell takes Alizon in for questioning at his home, Read Hall. She incriminates herself, her grandmother, who she says convinced her to become a witch, and Old Chattox.
30 March 1612

Suspects are arrested
On the strength of Alison's testimony and that of her brother James, several arrests are made; Demdike, Chattox, her daughter Anne Redferne and Alizon herself are arrested and imprisoned in Lancaster Castle.
2 April 1612

Jennet Preston Executed
Tried at York, Jennet is found guilty of bewitching Thomas Lister senior to death and sentenced to hang: the sentence is carried out two days later.
27 - 29 July, 1612

Witches on Trial
The remaining suspects are tried at the Summer Lancaster Assizes and continue to further incriminate themselves and each other. Demdike does not make it to court, dying in prison before the trial starts.
18 August 1612

Sentence is passed
Of the remaining accused, ten are sentenced to hang for many counts of murder by witchcraft between them. Margaret Pearson escapes the noose, sentenced to imprisonment and four times in the pillory.
19 August 1612

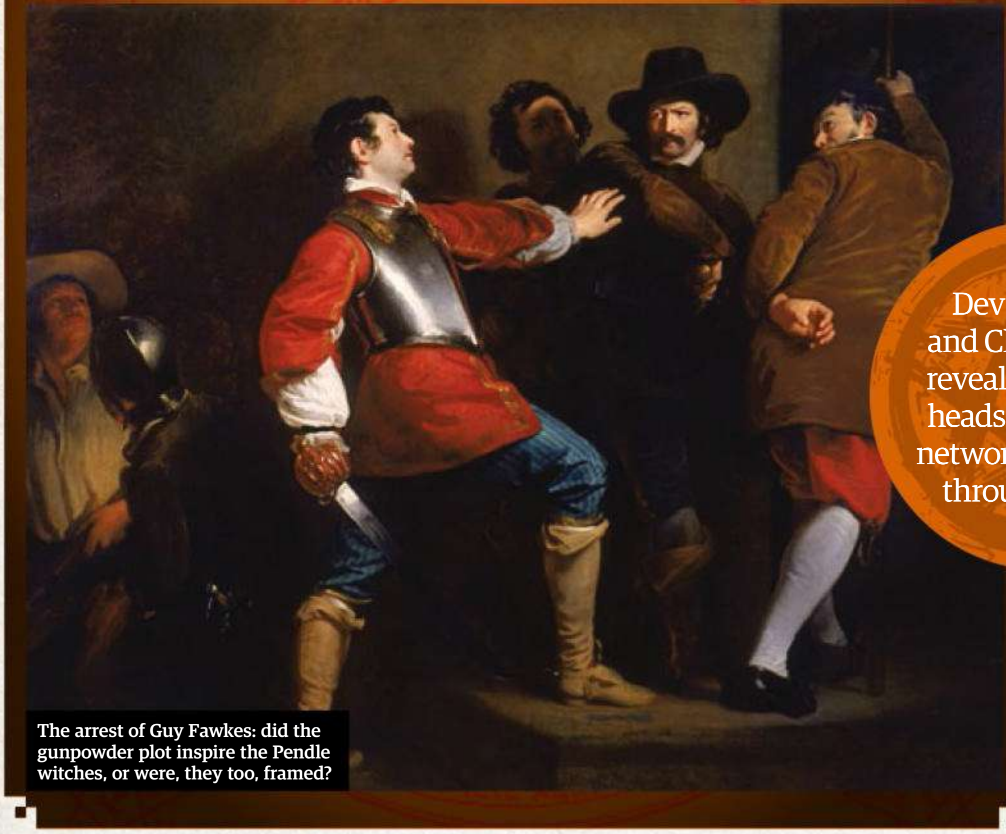
Pendle Witches executed
The condemned are executed and pass into history and the pages of our books as some of the most infamous witches in England's history. Thomas Potts later produces his lengthy account, *The Wonderfull Discoverie* justifying the outcome.
20 August 1612

Gunpowder, Treason and Plot

One of the accusations against the Pendle witches was the plot to blow up Lancaster Castle in order to rescue the imprisoned Alizon, Demdike, Chattox and her daughter. This revelation caused great alarm and held particular significance, coming as it did only a few years after Guy Fawkes' failed attempt against the King and Parliament. What, if any, truth did the accusation hold? James I and his councillors, along with those of the elite classes were acutely attuned to any hint of conspiracy, and extremist Catholics and witches were the dual threat of the era. Tarring the Pendle suspects with the brush of both might well have suited the needs of Judges Bromley and Altham, attempting to second-guess the wishes of their royal master. Potts' dedication of his account to Sir Thomas Knyvet, the very man who found Guy Fawkes in the cellars, likewise shows that social order, political stability and witchcraft, along with the need to justify what happened at Lancaster, were on the minds of all concerned.

After all, where would the accused have been able to find the gunpowder necessary in order to carry out their supposed plan? Those gathered at Malkin Tower may have spoken in the heat of the moment, their words then taken fatally out of context by young Jennet Device. Alternatively, the words might have been fed to the susceptible girl, only too willing to please, perhaps in exchange for her family's freedom.

There very likely was a plot: the question remains, against whom?



The arrest of Guy Fawkes: did the gunpowder plot inspire the Pendle witches, or were, they too, framed?

Lancaster Castle: Old Demdike died here before making it to trial, from illness or mistreatment

Now the meeting became, if later reports are to be believed, a chance to discuss an all important topic: how to free the suspects from prison. Later examination of those in attendance revealed that a deadly plan was hatched. The castle was to be blown up, serving the dual purpose of liberating the prisoners and killing the unpopular gaoler.

It was no time at all before Nowell learned of the ominous gathering. One might almost say it played right into his hands. Further questions were asked and on the strength of this news, further arrests were made, the meeting recast in the form of a witches' sabbat, until now, familiar only in tales of witchcraft from the Continent. Under such pressure, family and neighbourly connections imploded, incriminations and events were dragged up from years before as suspects confessed and accused each other in turn. Between them, the Device family and Chattox were revealed to be the heads of a terrible network of witches throughout the area, in possession of various spirits who did their bidding, wreaking havoc on those in the area who upset them. Jennet Preston from Gisburn had come to the gathering to seek help in murdering Thomas Lister in revenge for having her tried for witchcraft at the recent assizes. Alice Nutter had likewise been there, perhaps just paying a neighbourly call after hearing of the arrest of a friend, but now caught up in the accusations like the rest. Jane and John Bulcock, members of the dangerous group that preyed on the innocent were also named.

Four months passed with the suspected witches in Gaol, subjected to the far from sanitary conditions and deprivations of life in Lancaster Castle cells. It was too much for Demdike: she succumbed to illness and died before the Lancaster Summer Assizes, where the witches were to be tried.

The Device family and Chattox were revealed to be the heads of a terrible network of witches throughout the area

The trial opened 18 August under Judge Sir Edward Bromley. The accused were brought into the packed and crowded court room in turn: with the place too noisy to hear properly what was being asked, disoriented and drained from lack of sleep and the deprivations of prison and with no defence allowed, the odds were stacked against them from the outset. With her mother now safe from censure, Elizabeth Device was cast in the role of the worst witch of them all, her foul deeds and behaviour revealed for all to hear. If the account is to be believed, the group fit perfectly the stereotypical image of witches. Old blind Chattox, Elizabeth Device with one eye looking in one direction while the other eye looked in another, and James Device, weak of spirit and body, barely able to stand or speak clearly when he was called to do so: they were witches, it was clear, inside and out.

Tales of demonic pacts, image magic, sabbats and spells kept the crowd agog, each fresh evidence further proving that the accused were guilty of not only witchcraft but religious and social unrest. To further ensure the desired outcome the prosecution had an ace up their sleeve in the form of nine-year-old Jennet Device. If Alizon had begun the spiral of condemnation against them all, it was young Jennet who sealed their fate. Being too short to see or be seen, the girl was stood on a table for maximum effect, speaking out against her family and neighbours as she identified those who had been at Malkin Tower and related their purpose for being so. As the girl was produced Elizabeth Device broke down, yelling at her daughter as she realised

500 years on, Pendle Hill marked the anniversary of the trials

the terrible outcome that her words would have. The girl was, it was said, confused and upset by the outburst – taken as further proof of the terrible nature of Elizabeth Device – when her mother was removed she continued in her testimony.

By the end of the day, Chattox, Elizabeth Device and James Device were found guilty on various counts of murder by witchcraft. Anne Redferne fared better: the daughter of Chattox was acquitted of the charge of murdering Robert Nutter. The following day brought more guilty verdicts: Alizon Device, Alice Nutter, John and Jane Bulcock, Katherine Hewitt, and Isobel Robey, were all found guilty and condemned to death. Anne Redferne's luck also ran out. Despite the previous day's escape, she was tried on the charge of murdering Christopher Nutter and the charge stuck. Anne was found guilty and sentenced to hang with the rest.

Jennet Preston had been returned to her native Yorkshire where she was once more tried for murder by witchcraft, this time of Thomas Lister senior. Jennet was found guilty and executed 29 July.

The executions of the others took place on 20 August, and thus were created the most notorious witches in English history.

> Some believe James Device was tortured into confession, despite torture of suspects being illegal under English law

The injustice of the Pendle trial is embodied in this memorial to Alice Nutter, an enduring reminder of the events of 1612

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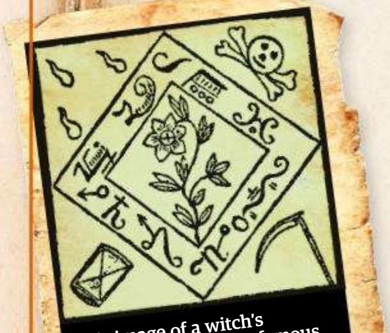
Make your own magic with the Book of Spells on **magazinesdirect.com**

The Witch's spellbook

Witches have recorded their spells and incantations and referred to them throughout history as ancient texts survive to influence modern practices

Written by Mike Haskew


This image of a witch's talisman appears in a famous grimoire titled the *Black Pullet*

Since the concepts and practice of witchcraft date to at least classical antiquity, it follows reasonably that those who have concocted potions, chanted incantations, and cast spells throughout history should record their methods and makings for themselves and future generations of practitioners.

While accused witches of the Middle Ages and early modern period were convenient scapegoats, targets for hunters who used them to explain the origins of misfortunse, they evidently were literate, capable of either reading and writing or availing themselves of scribes or associates who performed these services. It is estimated that roughly 80 percent of accused witches in 16th-18th century Europe were women, often old, poor and sometimes unattractive in appearance. Remarkably, so-called witches were also pioneers in medicine, chemistry, and other disciplines who managed to preserve their knowledge in writing.

Ancient Egyptians and Greeks laid down liturgy and literature on papyrus, referencing spells that required "an offering of frankincense" or the placing of an "uncorrupted and pure" child in a trance before a glowing fire. Dating to the 11th century, the Picatrix was originally written in Arabic, confirming the precept that witchcraft transcends cultural boundaries, and its more than 400 pages include some concoctions with disgusting ingredients along with spells, focusing on astrological energy in the pursuit of knowledge and power. Similarly, the Galdrabók originated in Iceland in the 16th century and contains contributions from numerous witches. Its 47 spells include runes purported to harbour supernatural attributes, and much of its content relates to physical healing for such conditions as fatigue, headaches, sleeplessness, and childbirth.

Although its exact date of origin is unknown, *The Sworn Book of Honorius* is verified to have existed during the 14th century. Its oldest preserved manuscript dates to 1347. The work opens with a stinging rebuke of the Roman Catholic church, and its text supposedly assists in the practice of necromancy. Witchcraft lore explicitly specifies that only three copies of this book can be produced, that anyone who possesses one of these and is unable to find a suitable heir for their copy must take the text to their grave, and that those who ascribe to its teachings are required to refrain from keeping company with women.

Tangible evidence points to a substantial body of written witchcraft teachings that span the period from ancient times through the early modern period. Many of these have been exhaustively studied both for their genuine original purpose and their historical significance.

> "Witches were pioneers in medicine, chemistry, and other disciplines who managed to preserve their knowledge in writing"

Visions and mysterious volumes

Spellbooks come in all shapes and sizes, from leechbooks dealing with common maladies, to grimoires instructing how to summon demons

The body of written texts associated with witchcraft varies widely and includes books of magic spells called grimoires, medieval Anglo-Saxon medical tomes called leechbooks, and volumes of cryptic symbols known as sigils that have often been associated with sorcery or otherwise serve as the signature of – or way to invoke – a demon.

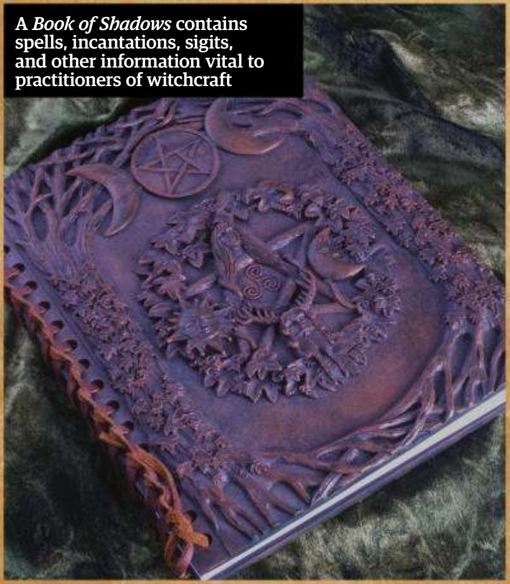
The grimoire is a general handbook for witches, and its origin is nearly as old as the practice itself. Grimoires include spells, incantations, instructions for making talismans and amulets, and procedures for summoning other-worldly spirits. The earliest grimoires are believed to have been produced in ancient Mesopotamia and predate the 4th century BCE. An essential component of a witch's work, they have been produced across millennia, and the books themselves have at times been considered sources of supernatural power and strength.

One of the most famous grimoires is the *Key of Solomon*, which some have claimed to be authored by King Solomon himself. However, the work more likely dates to Renaissance Italy. Divided into two books, it exists in numerous translations, which contain subtle differences. A work of conjurations and curses, purifications, and other exercises, its content reflects a multi-cultural Islamic, Jewish, and Late Antiquity Greco-Roman influence.

The best-known book of its type, *Bald's Leechbook*, dates to the 9th century, and a single manuscript, housed in the British Library, survives. Divided into two sections, the first dealing with external maladies and the second with internal conditions, the leechbook offers practical cures for headaches, shingles, and aching feet.

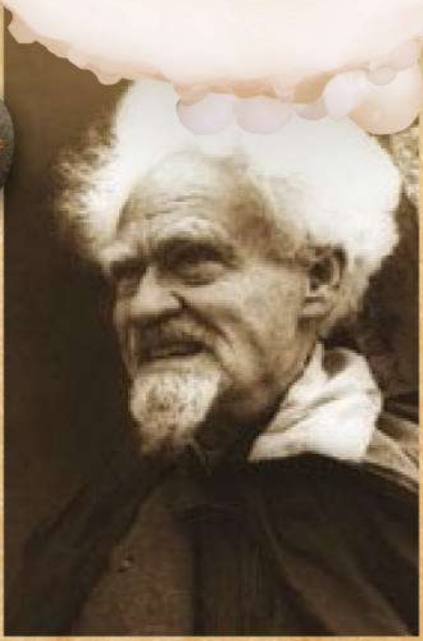
Medieval witches used sigils as representations of angels and demons that they might call upon, and the grimoire *The Lesser Key of Solomon* lists 72 demons representing the hierarchy of hell, and their corresponding sigils. Presenting a demon's sigil was thought to provide the witch with some degree of control over it.

> The word *grimoire* comes from a French figure of speech meaning 'hard to understand'



A *Book of Shadows* contains spells, incantations, sigits, and other information vital to practitioners of witchcraft

A witch consults a spell book while performing an incantation. Spell books are often personalised by their owners



A modern grimoire

Sometime during the late 1940s, Gerald Gardner, the acknowledged father of Wicca, wrote his *Book of Shadows*, subsequently introducing it to the members of his Bricket Wood coven. While *Book of Shadows* is a term generally used to describe a witch's personal volume containing their own incantations and rituals, Gardner contended that his book included information he had been given as a member of the New Forest coven decades earlier along with his own contributions.

Although he asserted that sections of the book had their origins in early witchcraft historiography, sections were actually attributable to other books as well, such as the *Key of Solomon*, a text probably from the Renaissance, the *Gospel of the Witches* written by Charles Godfrey Leland and purported to be the religious book of an Italian coven, and from the writings of poet Rudyard Kipling and occult practitioner and magician Aleister Crowley. Doreen Valiente, high priestess of the Bricket Wood coven, made significant alterations to Gardner's book after questioning its authorship.

Gardner stated that witches had been prohibited from putting their rituals and incantations in writing in earlier times due to fear of persecution, but they later began doing so. The publication of Gardner's *Book of Shadows* spurred greater interest in Wicca, and the notion of such books has become a staple of popular culture.

Practising the witch's art

The witch persona revolves around the ability to cast spells, predict the future, heal the sick, and place curses. After their arrest, accused witches were subjected to harsh interrogation and torture. Confessions were extracted under duress, and they were often based strongly on suggestion, ranging from flying on brooms, poles or animals to meetings with the devil involving seduction, debauched ritual sex, and selling of souls in exchange for dark powers. Accused witches were stripped and searched for marks on their bodies, signs the individual was the devil's own.

Witches would cast spells for many purposes, from finding love to improving financial or social position, punishing enemies, and removing warts. Those willing to pay might purchase a spell for a good harvest. Conversely, witches were also accused of murders, including the deaths of children. During the Middle Ages, a significant climatic cooling period occurred – witches were blamed for crop failures, pandemic disease, and any increases in criminal activity that followed. After the Black Death swept through Europe in the 14th century and decimated villages, the attitude toward witches shifted from curiosity and tolerance to fear and persecution.

> Witches were blamed for anything from crop failures to the sudden death of children

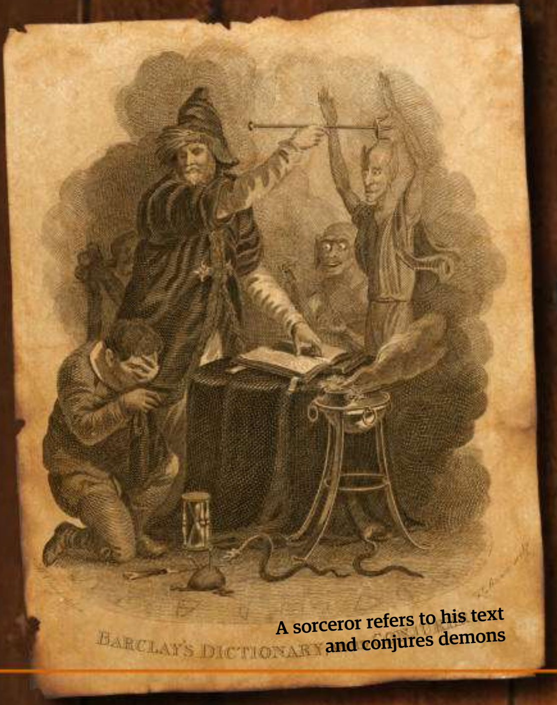
Curing any ailments from cancer to halitosis and poison ivy were other common practices undertaken by witches. Simmering the fresh root of a dogtooth violet or the tongue of an adder in milk and then drinking the concoction supposedly cured stomach ulcers, while an ounce of trailing arbutus leaves in boiling water, taken several times a day, cured kidney stones.

Perhaps the most infamous of England's witch trails was that of the Pendle Witches in Lancashire in the summer of 1612. Nine women and two men were hanged, and the entire affair began with a curse. A young woman either begged or asked to purchase pins from a local peddler. After she was refused, the peddler suffered a stroke. The woman confessed that she had sold her soul to Satan and asked the Devil to cripple the peddler. Curses ranged from simple to complex, involving just a spit of saliva, a written note later burned, clay figures or dolls, or a lengthy ritual spanning several days.

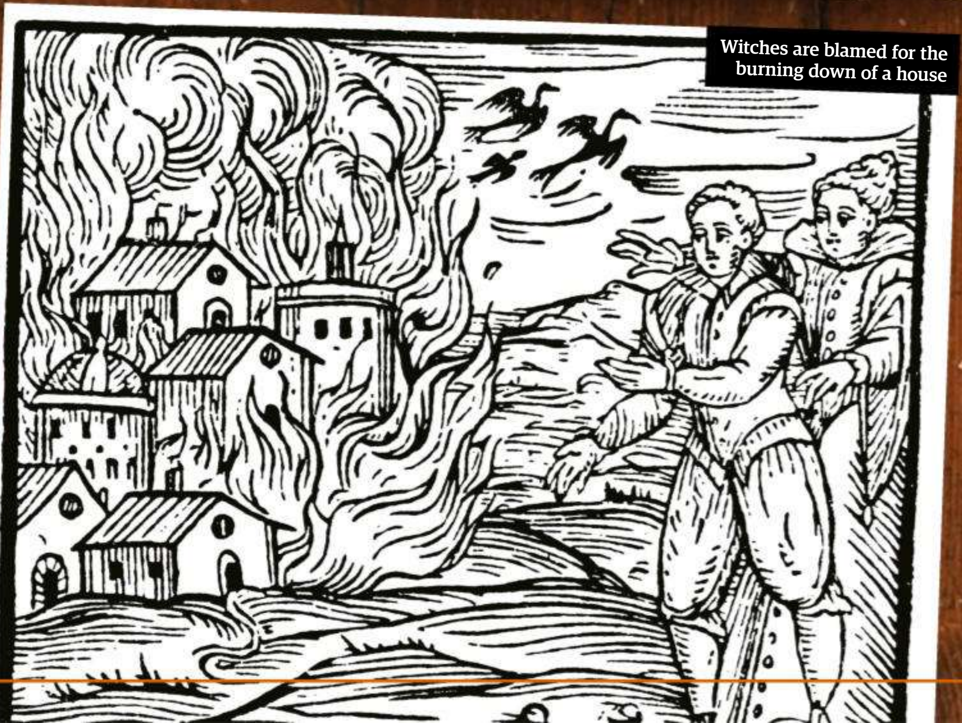
Despite this, witches were consulted for their clairvoyance or precognition. One English witch, Mother Shipton of Knaresborough, Yorkshire, is believed to have predicted the invention of trains, planes, automobiles, and the telegraph centuries before they appeared. Amulets and charms were also believed to be effective protection. Carried or hung in windows, these consisted of bags of herbs, sigits, or miniature everyday items such as nails or horseshoes.

Spells in a witch's arsenal

- Afflicted neighbour's children with strange symptoms and behaviour
- Conjured the spirit of a dead man
- Manipulated the weather to produce rain or snow
- Caused an individual to suffer nightmares
- Cast a love spell to win the heart of a man
- Cursed enemies with continuing bad luck
- Provided protection from diseases
- Rid neighbour of an unwanted husband
- Recovered a lost object
- Silenced a gossiper



A sorceror refers to his text and conjures demons



Witches are blamed for the burning down of a house

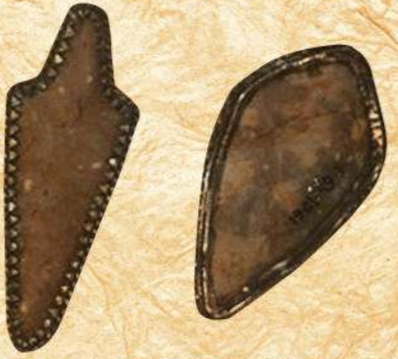
Protection from maleficium

Dead Cat

In Europe the custom of placing a dead cat within the walls of a house persists to this day. While serving as a good luck charm, the cat's remains are also believed by some to repel or lure a witch away from the premises. Although some have asserted that cats were once walled in alive, forensic evidence of dried carcasses suggest that the placement occurred after the animal had died. Dead rodents or birds have been discovered along with the cats as well.

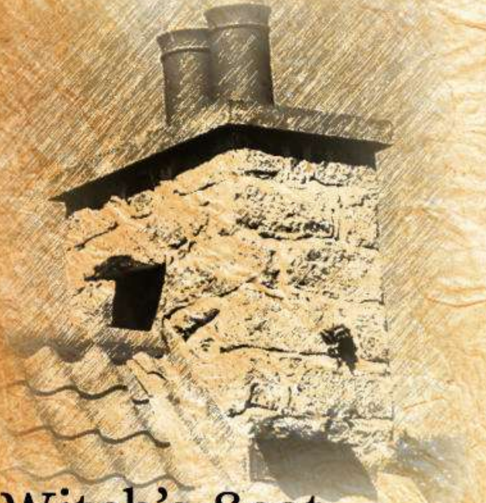
Elf Arrow

The ancient elf arrow, actually an arrowhead made by Neolithic peoples, was believed to have been used by elves to hunt cattle and inflict pains, called elfshot, on humans. However, when recovered they could be used as charms or amulets, often worn around the neck and adorned with silver, to ward of witches. Elf arrows were never to be sought, but were found in unusual places. They were to be protected from sunlight to prevent their falling into the hands of witches and used for evil purposes.



Witch Bottle

The witch bottle dates to the 16th century and provided a means of removing a spell cast by an adversarial witch. Sometimes prepared by another witch or folk healer, the witch bottle contained the victim's hair, nail clippings, and urine, and possibly rosemary, bent needles and pins, and red wine. Buried at the farthest corner of the victim's property, beneath the hearth, or in some other nondescript location, the witch bottle supposedly irritated the offending witch to the point that they would remove the spell.



Witch's Seat

Also known as a witch's stone, these were stones that protruded from the chimneys of homes. Their original purpose was probably to prevent water from running into the house between the thatched roof and stone chimney; however, through the years the stones became associated with witches flying about during their returns from meetings with the Devil. They supposedly rested on the seats. In the absence of the stones, the witches might descend the chimney and cause turmoil in the home.

Witch Ball

Typically made of brightly coloured glass, these spherical objects were popularised during the Middle Ages. Early examples were crudely made, but by the 19th century their production was improved with higher-quality glass. Sometimes hung in an eastern window or suspended by a thread, they warded off witches or trapped them inside the orbs. Folk tales suggest that witch balls also protected the dwelling from the curse of the evil eye. The balls were sometimes filled with holy water or salt to increase effectiveness.

Rowan

In Britain the rowan tree was said to be the tree from which the Devil hanged his mother. Planted near the front door of a home or elsewhere on the property, it was considered a powerful deterrent against witches. The physical appearance of the rowan, a five-pointed star or pentagram on each berry and a vivid red colour, was believed the source of its strength. Crosses were sometimes made of rowan wood and worn for personal protection. Pieces of rowan were also attached to cattle.

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Magic in the Age of Enlightenment

Enlightenment was not the triumph of rationality over religion and superstition

Written by Derek Wilson

Not until 1865 did the word 'Enlightenment' come into being to describe certain 18th-century philosophical developments. Moreover, it was originally a term of disapprobation, implying 'shallow and pretentious intellectualism'. The relationship between religion, occultism and science was much more complex than the supposed banishing of all other forms of traditional knowledge and belief by empiricism (i.e. what can be proved by observation and calculation). For example, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the greatest scientific genius before Einstein, wrote more extensively about the Second Coming of Christ than he did about gravity, and Robert Boyle (1629-1691), the 'father of modern chemistry', left money in his will for 'annual lectures to be delivered for the defence of Christianity against atheism and other "errors".' We also need to bear in mind that the major intellectual developments of the period from the early 17th to the late 18th centuries were the result not only of remarkably gifted thinkers, but also of major politico-religious movements in what was a very troubled period of European history. That period began with the Thirty Years' War on the Continent and the Civil War in Britain. It included religious revival movements on both sides of the Atlantic. It ended with the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

> Most scholars identify Newton as an Antitrinitarian monotheist – he rejected the doctrine of the Trinity

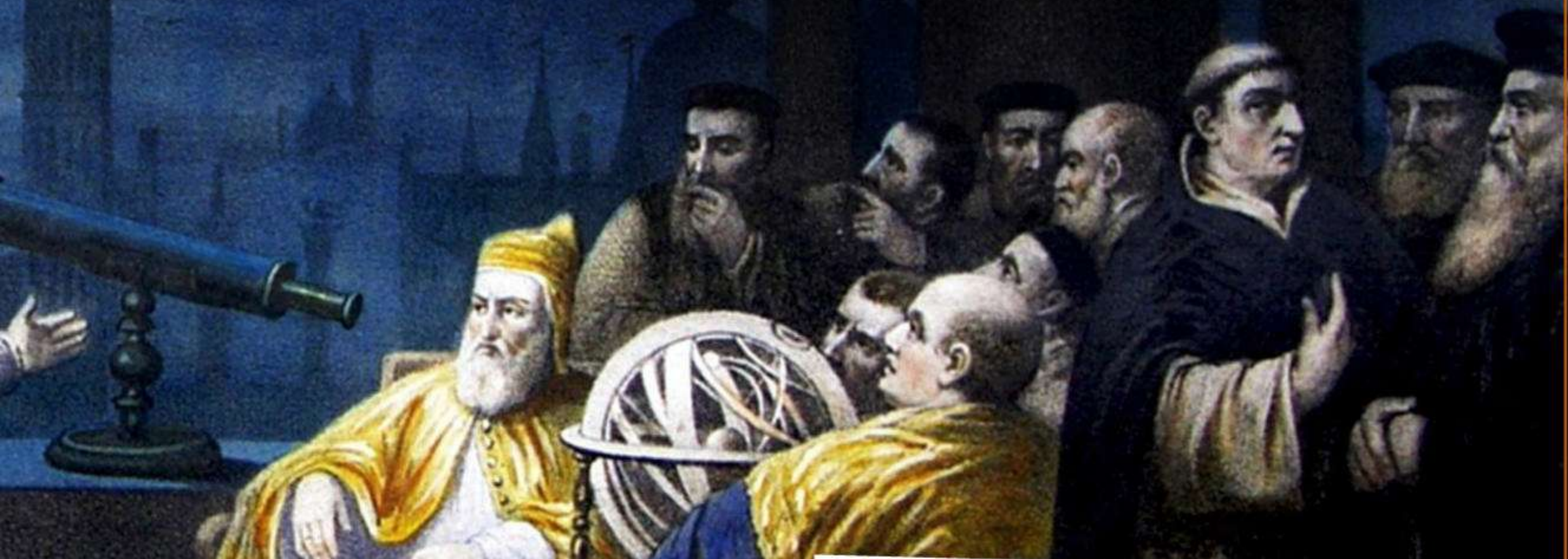
Let us begin in 1633 with the incident often represented as the beginning of the clash between religion and science, the papal condemnation of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). The Italian astronomer had long since embraced Copernicus' heliocentric theory – that the Earth moves around the Sun. Copernicus had demonstrated this mathematically, but Galileo had confirmed it by means of observations using his newly developed telescope. Traditionalists rejected heliocentrism because they were wedded to the long-established physics laid down by the 4th century BCE philosopher Aristotle, and because various Bible references described the movements of heavenly bodies as they appeared from Earth. We still think of the Sun as 'rising' in the East and 'setting' in the West, even though we know that it is actually our planet that moves. To most of our 17th century ancestors it was perfectly obvious that the Sun did the moving. As for Copernicus' apparent contradiction of the Bible, Galileo agreed with a prominent cardinal who observed that 'the Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go'.

All this would have remained within the realm of scholarly debate had not the pope come down firmly on the side of the traditionalists. He threw the weight of the Church behind the Aristotelian view. What was at stake, therefore, was not a theory of astrophysics, but the authority of the pope. For over 100 years the Catholic church had been under siege from Protestants and other heretics who challenged various aspects of belief and practice. In response, Rome became steadily more obdurate, buttressing its understanding of truth with the threat of condemnation and punishment by the Inquisition. Under these circumstances many church officials who might otherwise have been ready to give Galileo a hearing fell into line with the official Roman verdict. Some of them even refused to look through Galileo's telescope, believing that it must be some kind of magic device designed to seduce them from the truth.

Then, in 1623, Galileo had what seemed to be a stroke of luck. One of his own friends became pope as Urban VIII. He studied Galileo's arguments and instructed him to write a book describing the scholarly debate. The pope made two stipulations: Galileo was only to present heliocentrism as a possible theory. He was also to ensure that Urban's own position was clearly represented. Galileo, therefore, wrote A Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems. As the title suggests, the subject was presented as a discussion between a wise Copernican, 'Salviati', and a stupid, obscurantist Aristotelian, 'Simplicio'. It was through the mouth of Simplicio that the author presented Urban's arguments. The pope was furious. He summoned the old man (now in his 70s) back to Rome to face a charge of disobedience. He was found guilty, though three of his judges refused to sign the indictment. He was obliged to confess publicly that he believed everything taught by holy church. He was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment (which would likely have killed him off quickly) but this was commuted to house arrest in his own home.

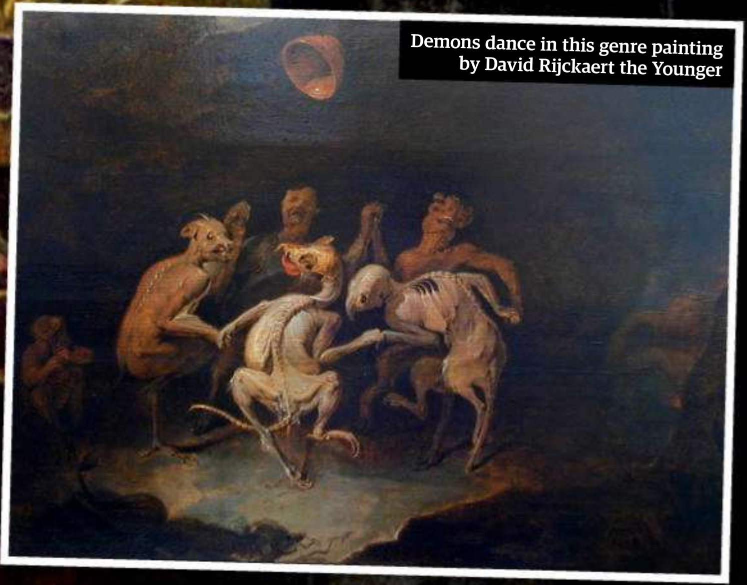
About the time that Galileo was clashing with ecclesiastical authority in Italy, on the other side of the Alps a conflict of altogether more terrifying and wide-ranging proportions was taking place. Between about 1626 and 1631, parts of Germany were in the grip of witch mania. Sporadic outbreaks of persecution were not uncommon in both Catholic and Protestant territories. An earlier one in Bonn was describe by a contemporary in these words:

"There must be half the city implicated for already professors, law students, pastors, canons, vicars and monks have been arrested and burned. ... The chancellor and his wife and the private secretary's wife are already executed. ... Students and boys of noble birth of nine, ten, eleven,



Galileo shows his telescope to the Doge Leonardo Donato

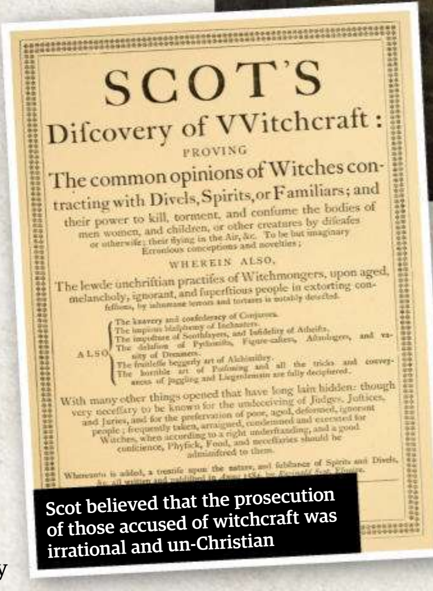
For more about sorcery, check out History of Magic on www.magazinesdirect.com



Demons dance in this genre painting by David Rijckaert the Younger

twelve, thirteen, fourteen years have been burned. In fine, things are in such a pitiful state that one does not know with what people one may talk and associate."

Witch mania is an example of a historical phenomenon that repeats itself over and again in all societies. We might call it the 'them' prejudice. People suffering misfortune frequently look for a scapegoat; the problem is the fault of 'them'. 'Them' may be whoever happens to be the current focus of community or national hatred. In the confusion and terror engendered by the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), hundreds of towns and cities were destroyed. Farmland was trampled by foraging armies. Millions died from disease and starvation as well as military combat. Germany lost a quarter of its population. With such manifest evils stalking the land it is not altogether surprising that sufferers looked for scapegoats and sought to purge their communities of them.



SCOT'S
Diſcovery of VVitchcraft:
PROVING
The common opinions of Witches contracting with Divels, Spirits, or Familiars; and their power to kill, torment, and conſume the bodies of men women, and children, or other creatures by diſeaſes or otherwiſe; their flying in the Air, &c. To be but imaginary Erronious conceptions and novelties;
WHEREIN ALSO,
The lewde unchriſtian practiſes of Witchmongers, upon aged, melancholy, ignorant, and ſuperſtitious people in extorting confeſſions, by inhumane terrors and tortures is notably detected.

Scot believed that the prosecution of those accused of witchcraft was irrational and un-Christian

Folklore provided lurid descriptions of black magicians and their activities. It was widely believed that Satan summoned witches and wizards to attend 'sabbats', where blasphemous travesties of Christian worship were enacted and sacrifices were offered. Those called to such assemblies flew through the air to be present. None of this had any part in Christian doctrine but, since the Bible endorsed belief in spiritual conflict between the powers of good and evil, little, if anything, was done by church authorities to challenge such stories. Among the intelligentsia, opinions were divided. Some men of science, such as Robert Boyle, accepted the common conviction that witches existed and were in league with the devil. But there was a growing scepticism, not only about the more bizarre accounts of occult activity, but also about the very existence of witchcraft. Samuel Harsnett (1561-1631), a cleric who eventually rose to be Archbishop of York, wrote a treatise condemning clergy who carried out exorcisms. He gave it as his opinion that people who "have their brains baited and their fancies distempered with the imaginations and apprehensions of Witches, Conjurors, and Fairies, and all that Lymphatical Chimera, I find to be marshalled in one of these five ranks: Children, Fools, Women, Cowards, sick or black melancholic discomposed wits."

Other critics, while debunking the more lurid accounts of occult activity, were cautious about declaring that witchcraft did not actually exist. Not only were they anxious to avoid being tarred as heretics, they also did not want to be seen as at odds with the law, for most European states had anti-witchcraft legislation in place.

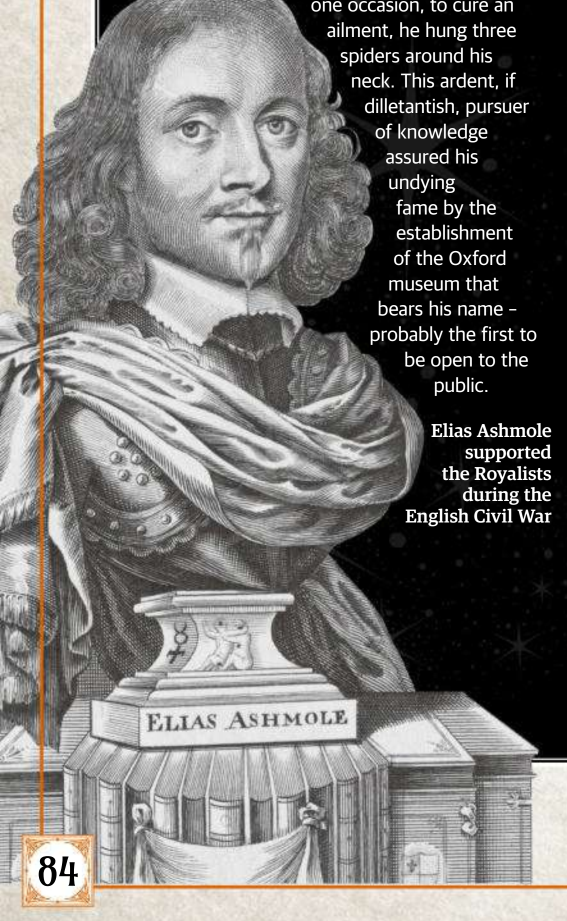
Then again, the prevailing philosophical framework in which post-Renaissance debate took place made it difficult for radical thinkers to deny the possibility of magic. Neo-Platonic metaphysics taught the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms and sought ways of harnessing the powers latent in the cosmos. It took the better part of two centuries for a new rationale regarding the occult to become firmly established among the leaders of society and to bring all witchcraft prosecutions to an end.

Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General, may have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of women

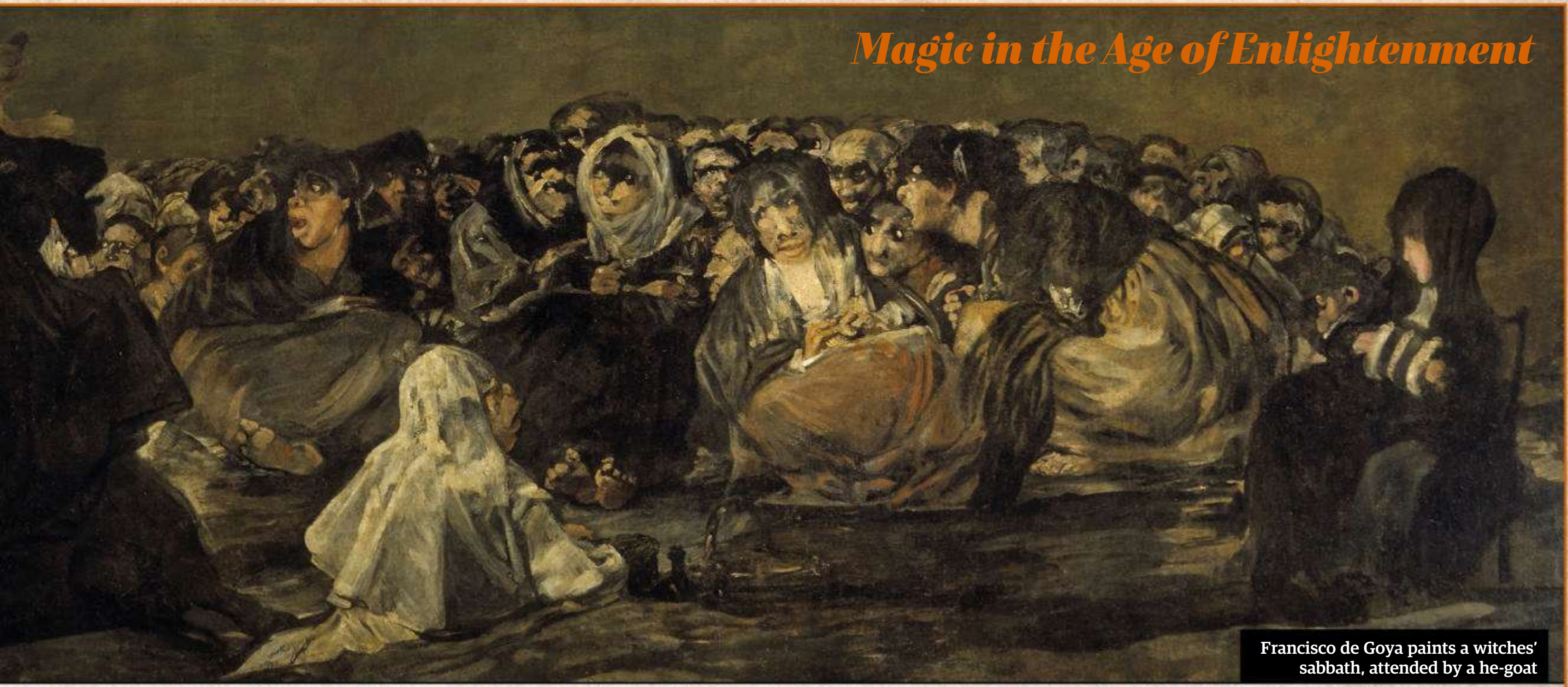
The laying of a new philosophical ground plan was undertaken by thinkers trying to arrive at a logically acceptable concept of God in a Europe where Catholics and Protestants were zealously slaughtering each other. As early as 1584, a down-to-earth Kentish gentleman called Reginald Scot had debunked the whole idea of malevolent magical powers on religious grounds. In his

Elias Ashmole

Elias Ashmole (1617-1692) was an example of the educated Englishman whose tastes were catholic and who cannot, therefore, be pigeon-holed as a friend or enemy of the occult. There were many such. He went to London in 1633, became a solicitor and applied himself assiduously to building a fortune by cultivating the right people. He supported Charles I during the Civil War and joined the royal court in Oxford. There he took the opportunity to extend his education and his wide-ranging studies embraced mathematics, physics, astrology, alchemy and magic. Ashmole was a staunch Church of England man who held all nonconformists in contempt, but he became a Freemason in 1646 and he probably also flirted with Rosicrucianism. When designing his coat of arms he surmounted the shield with an image of the god Mercury supported by figures representing the twin constellation Gemini. His chosen motto, 'Ex Uno Omnia' (All comes from the One), indicated his fascination with the Hermetic tradition. Court favour and financially advantageous marriages enabled him to amass a huge collection of books, prints, coins, medals and curios that he bestowed on the University of Oxford, which, in 1669, awarded him a doctorate in Medicine. How far his own knowledge merited this accolade is not altogether clear. On one occasion, to cure an ailment, he hung three spiders around his neck. This ardent, if dilletantish, pursuer of knowledge assured his undying fame by the establishment of the Oxford museum that bears his name – probably the first to be open to the public.



Elias Ashmole supported the Royalists during the English Civil War



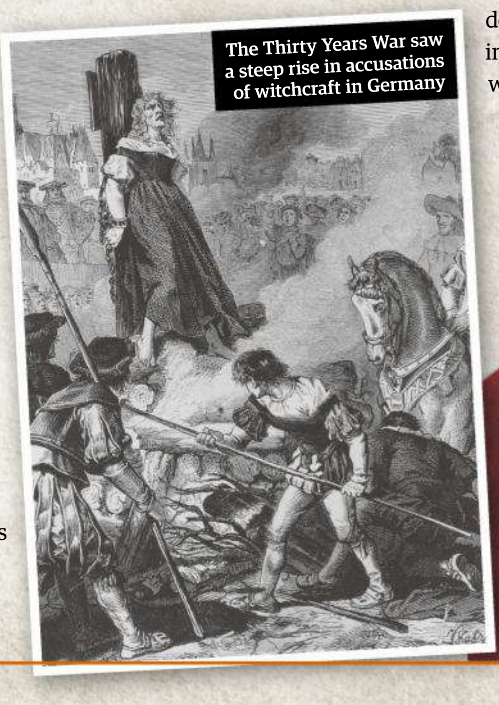
Francisco de Goya paints a witches' sabbath, attended by a he-goat

Discoverie of Witchcraft he argued that an all-powerful God would not allow any human agent to exercise spiritual powers. Witches, Scot claimed, belonged to one of four categories. Some were innocent victims of malevolent neighbours, some were self-deluded, some were deliberate fraudsters, making money from phoney charms and potions. The rest were genuine – that is, they sought to inflict harm by supernatural means, but any success they achieved was attributable to chance or to sinister means, such as poison or what we would now call auto-suggestion. Scot's scepticism gradually gained ground among thinking people. What is surprising, from a modern viewpoint, is that it took so long.

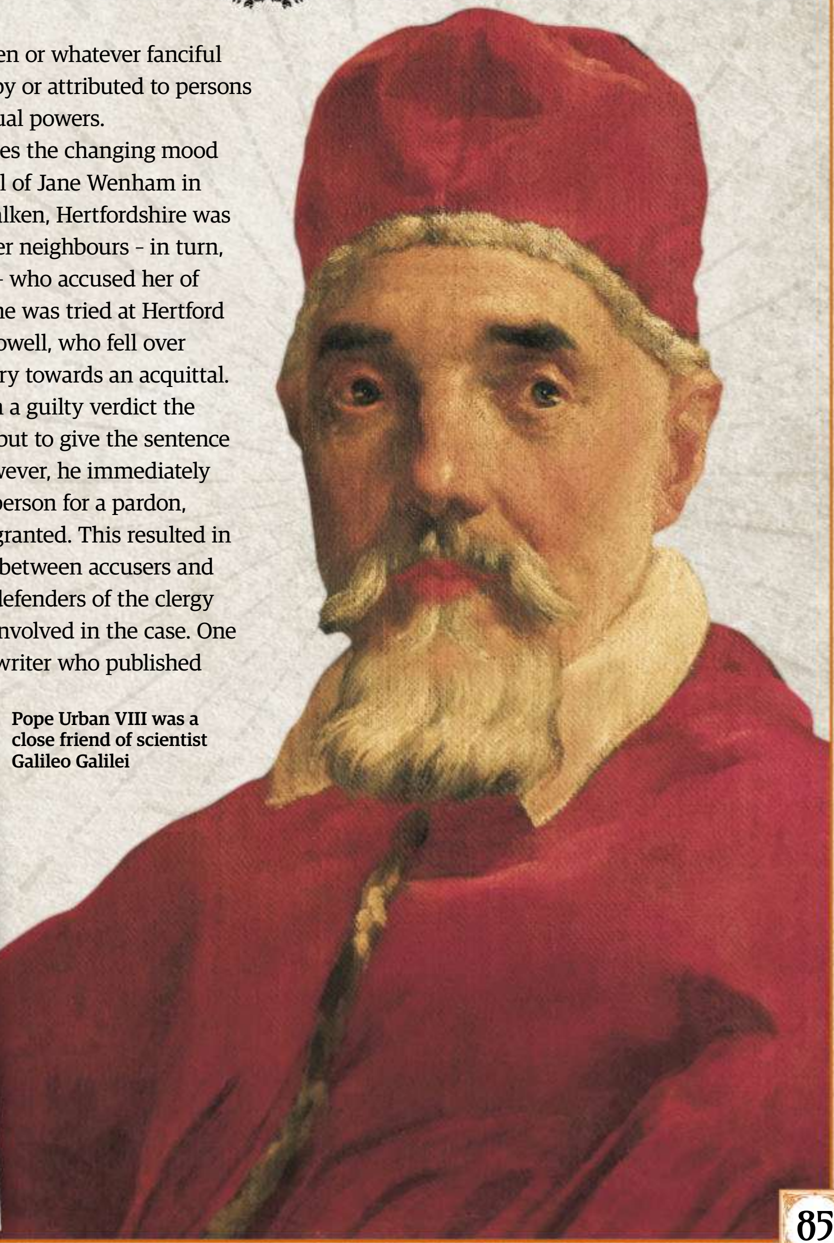
In the 17th century a new brand of philosophers emerged who applied their own kind of solvents to the common belief in black magic. Men like René Descartes (1596-1650), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) were all pondering the existence and nature of God and coming to very different conclusions. The common ground they shared was a 'mechanistic' concept of the universe. However it came into being, it operated according to strict rules. Those rules were informative about the one who devised them (if, indeed, such a being existed). One by-product of this understanding of the cosmos was that it could not be changed from within – that is to say that no human being could manipulate it, perform miracles or cast effective spells. In other words, there are no such things as witches or wizards or cunning men or whatever fanciful name might be claimed by or attributed to persons thought to possess spiritual powers.

> "There was a growing scepticism... about the very existence of witchcraft"

Nothing better illustrates the changing mood of the times than the trial of Jane Wenham in 1712. Jane, a widow of Walken, Hertfordshire was denounced by some of her neighbours – in turn, egged on by local clergy – who accused her of various malicious acts. She was tried at Hertford Assizes before Sir John Powell, who fell over backwards to steer the jury towards an acquittal. When the jury brought in a guilty verdict the judge had no alternative but to give the sentence of death by hanging. However, he immediately applied to the Crown in person for a pardon, which was immediately granted. This resulted in a frenzied pamphlet war between accusers and defenders of the clergy involved in the case. One writer who published



The Thirty Years War saw a steep rise in accusations of witchcraft in Germany



Pope Urban VIII was a close friend of scientist Galileo Galilei anonymously (probably to avoid accusations of atheism) pointed out that human beings were able to change the 'rules' governing nature, but certainly not by invoking demons.

"Not only our witchcrafts have been banished, but all arts and sciences have been greatly improved. Our buildings are much more beautiful and commodious and yet more cheaply built and easier kept in repair. Our gardens and orchards are stocked with new and nobler fruits and fields and woods with useful trees. Many of our lands that were almost useless are loaded with new kinds of grass and roots, by better understanding the improvement of the soil ... Physic and surgery are new moulded and improved, for the lengthening out of life in ease ... The farthest planets are brought near and their motions wonderfully accounted for ... All arts are improved, God is seen and admired in his works, and the honour of religion no ways lessened." (A Letter from a Physician in Hertfordshire to his Friend in London)

That vision of a utopian world might not have convinced everyone who read it, but it did make the point that humanity could abandon magic without abandoning God. England was one of the first nations to put an end to witchcraft trials. Though unofficial lynchings did sometimes occur, the last legal conviction took place in 1716. It would be another 66 years before the last European state (Switzerland) abandoned witchcraft prosecutions.

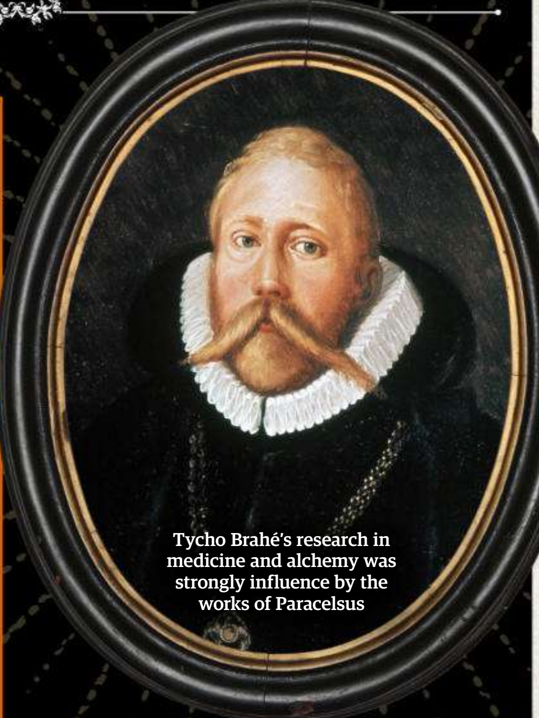
The author of 'A Letter from a Physician' cited the diffusion of scientific knowledge as a fundamental reason for the overcoming of superstition and the greater wellbeing of society. There was much truth in this assertion. One of the hidden revolutions that took place in the second half of the 17th century was that education became fashionable. Between the end of the Thirty Years' War and the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars, Europe enjoyed a century and a half of relative peace. This enabled the more affluent members of society to concentrate on acquiring the arts of civilised living. This was the age of the Grand Tour. The scions of wealthy English families were despatched to the Continent for three years or so to learn foreign languages, discover foreign cultures and study with some of the leading intellectuals of the age. The more inquisitive and acquisitive travellers returned with cartloads (sometimes shiploads) of souvenirs - paintings, sculptures, books, various scientific specimens - with which to adorn their mansions and impress their friends.

A parallel development was the foundation of academies where gentlemen of leisure met to discuss all aspects of science and the arts. In

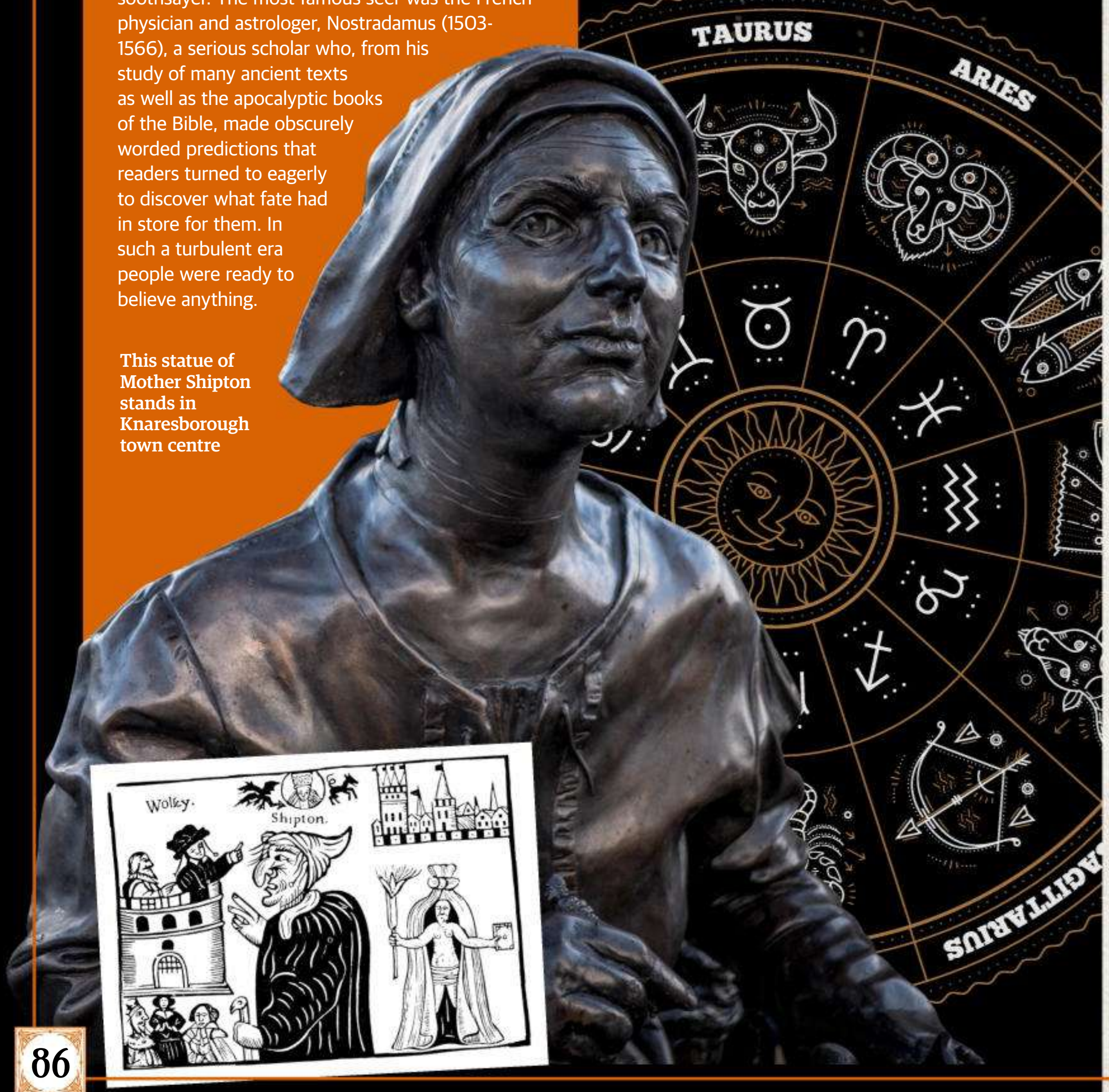
"People were ready to believe anything"

Horoscopes

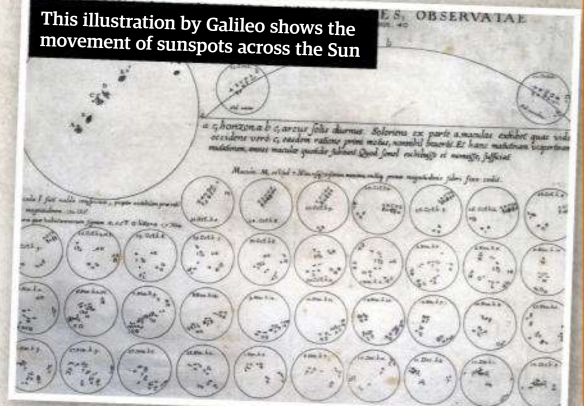
Having a horoscope prepared by an astrologer was a luxury that only the wealthy could afford – until the spread of printed periodicals. Canny publishers realised that a huge market existed among people who wanted predictions about their future or advice on the most propitious time to undertake a venture. They began to produce almanacs and it is calculated that, by 1650, over 400,000 of these cheap handbooks were being sold annually in England. Almanacs provided a variety of information, from important dates to medical advice; from astronomical details to predictions. They varied in quality. Some were produced by leading astronomers/astrologers, such as the Danish scholar Tycho Brahe. Others were catchpenny, sensationalist offerings deliberately exploiting the gullible. It was almanacs that now made popular the predictions of ancient soothsayers. The legendary prophecies of Merlin, written in the 12th century by Geoffrey of Monmouth, were retold and made to apply to current or imminent events, as were the sayings of Mother Shipton, a 16th century Yorkshire soothsayer. The most famous seer was the French physician and astrologer, Nostradamus (1503-1566), a serious scholar who, from his study of many ancient texts as well as the apocalyptic books of the Bible, made obscurely worded predictions that readers turned to eagerly to discover what fate had in store for them. In such a turbulent era people were ready to believe anything.



Tycho Brahé's research in medicine and alchemy was strongly influence by the works of Paracelsus



This statue of Mother Shipton stands in Knaresborough town centre


This illustration by Galileo shows the movement of sunspots across the Sun

1635 the Parisian Academy was established and, in 1666, this developed into the French Academy of Sciences. In 1662 the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge came into being and, as the name indicates, it enjoyed active royal patronage from the new king, Charles II. Similar learned bodies were set up in Berlin and other European centres. Here members delivered lectures, debated and performed experiments. They wrote reports of their proceedings, which were circulated to other members of this intellectual elite throughout Europe.

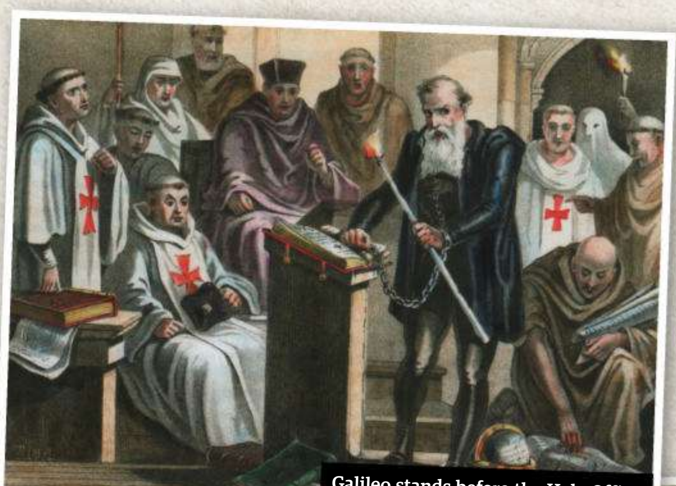
The Royal Society's motto 'Nullius in verba' is taken to mean 'take nobody's word for it'

But such societies did not only exist in major cities. Leaders of rural society who liked to think of themselves as cultured set up regional debating societies. For example, in 1710 certain Lincolnshire gentlemen and clergy established The Society of Gentlemen for the Supporting of Mutual Benevolence and Their Improvement in the Liberal Sciences and in Polite Learning. Among those invited to address its meetings were Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Hans Sloane (the president of the Royal Society, whose collection later formed the nucleus of the British Museum), the Rev William Stukeley (an antiquarian and celebrated archaeological pioneer of both the Stonehenge and Avebury excavations), and the poets Alexander Pope and John Gay. Also significant is the fact that among the Spalding Society's founder members was the Rector of Epworth, one Samuel Wesley, father of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist movement.

We now associate the Wesley brothers with the religious revival of the mid-18th century (together with its sister movement, the 'Great Awakening' led by George Whitefield in North America), but this does not mean that they were ignorant of or antipathetic to advances in science. On the contrary; John Wesley avidly read the writings of Robert Boyle, John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton. Of Newton he wrote that the great man "carried the lamp of knowledge into paths … that had been unexplored before."

Galileo's telescope, c.1610

Just as for Wesley there was no gulf between religion and science, so for Newton, who was President of the Royal Society from 1703 to 1727, there was no divide between science, religion and occultism. For this polymath, all aspects of the unknown were ripe for investigation. He devoted years to the study of alchemy. Among his voluminous unpublished papers there appear more than 50,000 words on the manufacture of the philosopher's stone, supposedly able to turn base metals into gold. But his investigations went beyond the study of transmutation. He was concerned to know how chemical substances were formed and what they were made of (what we would now call their molecular structure). In pursuit of such knowledge he did not hesitate to communicate with clandestine, pseudo-magical communities frowned upon by the rest of the scientific fraternity. Newton's knowledge of the Bible was prodigious and his approach to theology was just as individualistic as his reflections on 'pure' science.


Galileo stands before the Holy Office

The Battle of Breitenfeld (1631) was the Protestants' first major victory of the Thirty Years War

Social and political developments in the 18th century were fundamental to changes of attitude regarding the occult. The widening educational gap between upper and lower classes meant that working people in rural communities tended to cling longer to traditional beliefs. This explains, for example, why learned judges and doctors found themselves at odds with the stubborn witch beliefs of villagers. But the beginnings of industrialisation changed the demographic of many areas. People were drawn to the cities and left behind their rural communities and the folklore that lurked therein. This is an underlying reason for the gradual fading of occult beliefs. At the same time, philosophers and their wealthy patrons were directing their thinking away from speculation about the supernatural and towards the solving of political problems. King Louis XV of France (1710-1774) is credited with the prophetic utterance, 'Aprés moi le deluge'. The old order, headed by absolute monarchs like himself, was under threat from revolutionary forces – and from philosophers who challenged the principles upon which the concept of a semi-divine hereditary monarchy rested.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) were among the leading thinkers who explored the concept of the 'social contract' and the issue of political power. Was it top-down, invested by God in chosen leaders – monarchs and aristocrats – or bottom-up, residing in the people, who had the right to choose their own governors? Radical thinking gave some sort of rationale to revolutionary activists.

In 1776 American colonists severed ties with Britain. In 1789 the French Revolution broke out, King Louis XVI was executed, France became a republic and found itself at war. The decades of comparative peace were over. The Continent – and, indeed, the world – was entering an entirely new era of warfare. There would be new battles to be fought and new arguments to be aired.

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For more about modern witchcraft, check out History of Paganism on www.magazinesdirect.com

Gardner's Genesis of Wicca

Utilising ancient and recent writings and commentary, Gerald Gardner brought Wicca into modern religious discourse during the mid-20th century and became its first media star

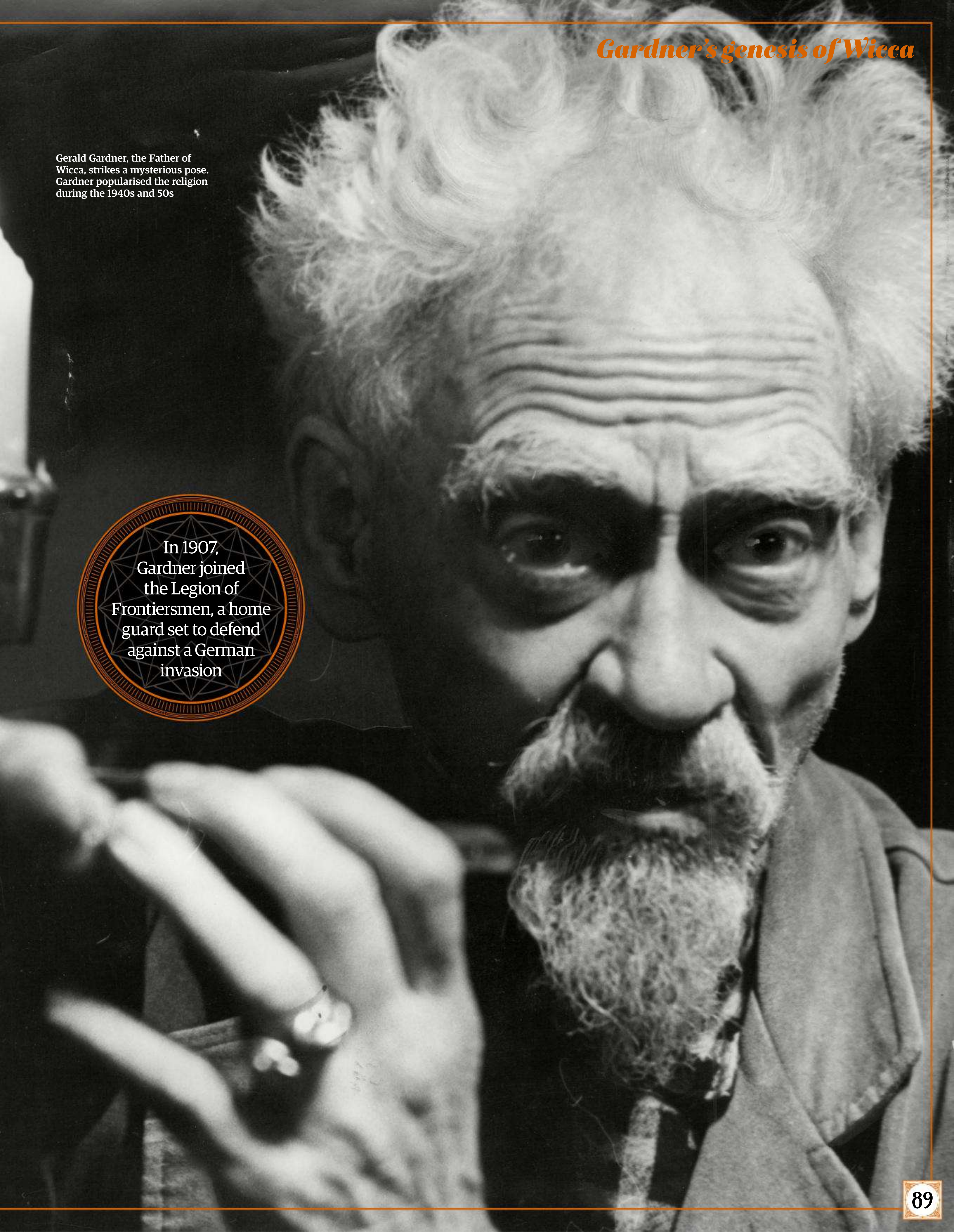
Written by Mike Haskew

Modern Wicca traces its origins to the early 20th century and the research and practice of individuals drawn to mysticism and occultism who sought a connection to the religions of the ancient world, particularly those of northern and western Europe.

While debate as to the religion's true origin continues, modern Wicca was popularised during the 1940s and 50s, particularly in the writings and teachings of Gerald Gardner, a former British civil servant and adventurer who travelled widely during his lifetime. He was drawn to the exploration of pagan religions of Asia and Africa as well as the ways of the druids and other practitioners. Wicca today includes followers who gather in covens, generally of up to 15 members, who practise witchcraft and the worship of nature. They revere a female deity, or Goddess, and other associated deities.

Wiccans generally see their religion as based in pre-Christian tradition, while it also includes elements of numerous ancient religions, drawn from many pre-existing traditions and interspersed with the esoteric writings of ancient and modern mystics. The religion includes ceremonial magic, tenets of Freemasonry, Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the religion of Thelema and its founder, the mystic Aleister Crowley. The foremost proponent of modern Wicca, indeed the "Father of Wicca", Gardner popularised the religion in the mid-20th century, particularly with the release of his Book of Shadows, a collection of the writings, spells and traditions of others brought together with some of Gardner's own thoughts and interpretations.

Gardner's journey through the world of mysticism was lifelong. Born in Blundellsands, Lancashire, England on 13 June 1884 to a wealthy family engaged in the timber trade, he grew up under the influence of his Irish nursemaid, Josephine 'Com' McCombie, and saw much more of her during his formative years than his own parents. He was a sickly boy, and his family financed moves with Com to the French Riviera, the Canary Islands, and the coast of Africa. Along the way, he developed a



Gerald Gardner, the Father of Wicca, strikes a mysterious pose. Gardner popularised the religion during the 1940s and 50s

In 1907, Gardner joined the Legion of Frontiersmen, a home guard set to defend against a German invasion

The festival of Samhain, All Hallows' Eve, is celebrated in Glastonbury as Pagans gather to mark the night of the dead

fascination with armaments that also lasted his entire life.

Gardner spent nine years in Madeira, a Portuguese island colony, and rarely returned to England. Since he was abroad for much of his youth, Gardner never attended formal schools and essentially taught himself to read and write. After Com married David Elkington, owner of a tea plantation in Ceylon (Sri Lanka today), Gardner moved with the couple and learned the rudiments of running the enterprise. He became fascinated with the Buddhist beliefs of the local Singhalese people. Returning to England in 1907, he gravitated toward a family of relatives, the Sergenesons, who were interested in fantasy and mysticism. They often described experiences such as seeing fairies. Gardner claimed also that these family members introduced him to the story that his own grandfather was a practising witch. He often told a story that the family believed an ancestor had been burned at the stake as a witch in Newburgh in 1610.

Gardner returned to Ceylon late in 1907 to participate in the administration of a rubber plantation that his father had invested in. He became interested in Freemasonry and joined the lodge in the capital city of Colombo, but within four years the rubber enterprise had failed. His father sold the real estate, and Gardner wandered to Borneo. Considering himself an amateur anthropologist and archaeologist, he associated with the native Dusun and Dyak peoples on the Asian island. He was enthralled by their social customs, and particularly their religious practices, reportedly participating in native rituals. During this period he contracted malaria and moved on to Singapore.

While working on a rubber plantation, Gardner was befriended by an American Muslim named Cornwall, who introduced him to the tenets of that faith. While amassing real estate that totalled hundreds of acres, Gardner made the confession of the Islamic faith but never became a practising Muslim himself. Soon after the outbreak of World War I, he joined the Malay States Volunteer Rifles, but later concluded that he could help the war effort more significantly by returning to England.

He arrived in 1916, attempted to enlist in the Royal Navy, but was denied due to health issues. He volunteered to work in a hospital outside Liverpool and experienced the horrors of combat-wounded soldiers while working as an orderly. A recurrence of his malaria prompted a return to Malaya that autumn, and he worked for the local government as an inspector of rubber commerce, probably amassing some wealth as he took bribes to ignore a brisk black market trade in opium.

For Gardner, a turning point in his life of occult enquiry occurred in 1927 as his father suffered from dementia, prompting a return to England.

> Gardner participated in archaeological digs in Egypt and became a fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute in the 1930s

The Pagan Sabbats

Wiccans and other pagans celebrate eight major holidays, or Sabbats, during a calendar year. These holy days make up the wheel of the year and are based on ancient pagan holy days marking the Earth's movement around the Sun and the change of seasons. Some Wiccans celebrate only the four cross-quarter days, Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhain, while others will celebrate all eight holy days, including Yule, Ostara, Midsummer and Mabon.

Imbolc, or St. Brigid's Day, the first holy day of the year, is observed on 1 and 2 February. Marking early spring, Imbolc recognises emergence from winter and lauds St. Brigid as a goddess. Ostara, the spring equinox, is observed around 21 March, commemorating the arrival of spring after the long winter. Beltane, also known as May Day, is celebrated on 1 May. Beltane is a celebration of fertility and procreation.

Midsummer is celebrated on 21 June, the summer solstice and longest day of the year. Wiccans observe the union of Heaven, Earth and Sun, while stressing healing magic and energy. Lughnasadh, also called Lammas, is celebrated on 1 August, marking the first of three harvest events. Mabon, the autumn equinox, is observed on 21 September, marking the second harvest festival as the season changes from summer to autumn.

Samhain, All Hallows' Eve, is celebrated on 31 October, marking the pagan new year, the night of the dead. Yule is celebrated between 20-22 December to mark the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. The observance symbolises the return of the Sun to rule the sky.

> "Gardner believed that spirits of deceased family members were quite active"

Gerald Gardner once owned and operated the Museum of Witchcraft. Its successor is now located in Boscastle, Cornwall, UK

Visiting spiritual mediums and attending séances and other rituals, he believed that spirits of deceased family members were quite active. An encounter with the spirit of a dead cousin profoundly affected his perspective on mysticism, and from that time he devoted much of his academic interests to the ideas of Spiritualism and an afterlife.

A whirlwind courtship and marriage took place that summer when he met Dorothea Frances 'Donna' Rosedale. He proposed the next day, and two weeks later, on 16 August, the couple married. Soon they returned to Malaya, and Gardner renewed his association with Freemasonry while working on archaeological digs and becoming more involved with folklore, mysticism and anthropology. During the 1930s he travelled further, spending time in Egypt, and in London he was introduced to the cult of the Mother Goddess. He lectured and wrote a book on weaponry and travelled throughout Asia, retiring to England at the insistence of his wife after his father's death in 1935.

Even after returning to Europe, the wanderlust continued, and Gardner travelled to the Middle East, becoming taken with the pagan goddess Ashtoreth and studying the deities of other ancient religions of the region, including Judaism. Plagued by chronic poor health, he was referred to a doctor who suggested that nudism might improve his physical fitness. As a member of a club in north London, he is thought to have met several influential people, one of whom introduced him to a contemporary pagan religion called Dionysianism. While traveling in the Mediterranean and living for months on the island of Cyprus, he wrote the novel A Goddess Arrives. After returning to England, he helped dig air raid trenches in London and volunteered as an air raid warden as World War II erupted in 1939.

Relocating temporarily to Highcliffe to escape incessant German bombing of London, Gardner became involved with the Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship, whose founder Alexander Sullivan claimed to be the reincarnation of numerous historical figures, including Pythagoras and Francis Bacon. While questioning many of the group's beliefs and practices, Gardner became particularly fond of several of its members. In September 1939 he was taken to an old house, required to remove his clothing, and guided through some sort of initiation ceremony during which he heard the word 'wica' and recognised it as Old English for 'witch'. He later asserted that this group constituted the New Forest coven. He became interested in druidry, a religious movement that stresses harmony amongst all things in the natural world, and joined the Ancient Druid Order, a fraternal organisation that initiated its members. He frequented its ceremonies and rites such as its Midsummer ritual at the ancient Stonehenge site. At the same time, he

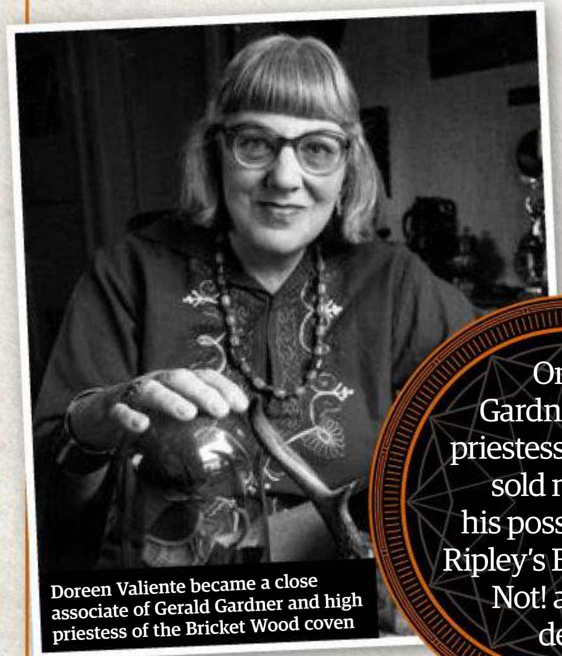
> In a 1951 magazine interview, Gardner asserted, "Of course I'm a witch. And I get great fun out of it"

The Book Of Shadows

The 'Book of Shadows' is an ancient term that originally related to the body of spells, incantations and ritual information belonging to an individual witch. Upon that witch's death, their personal book was traditionally destroyed. However, Gerald Gardner, the father of modern Wicca, used the title as a vehicle for a collection of such spells and ritual material in combination with his own writings and observations when he published *Book of Shadows* during the late 1940s or early 1950s. Gardner promoted his *Book of Shadows* as containing early spells and incantations that were rooted in ancient texts. Further analysis revealed that much of its content was taken from the Renaissance grimoire text called the *Key of Solomon* along with other writings.

Doreen Valiente, the one-time high priestess of the Bricket Wood coven, later made extensive revisions to Gardner's *Book of Shadows* when serious questions as to its authorship and content emerged. Some observers have speculated that the concept of the *Book of Shadows*, as Gardner promoted it, was his own invention. Valiente said that the idea came to him after viewing a magazine ad in 1949, and she was among the first to question his assertions. He reportedly responded to her inquiry by saying, "Well, if you think you can do better, go ahead."

Gerald Gardner popularised modern Wicca with the publication of his *Book of Shadows* in the mid-20th century



Doreen Valiente became a close associate of Gerald Gardner and high priestess of the Bricket Wood coven

joined the Folk-Lore Society and the Society for Psychical Research, while speaking on various topics.

In the spring of 1947, Gardner met Aleister Crowley, who had founded the religion of Thelema in 1904. Their association grew, and Gardner was elevated to high status in the Ordo Templi Orientis, a fraternal order in which Crowley was an influential member. Crowley died in 1947, and Gardner learned of this while travelling around the United States. For a while he led the Ordo Templi Orientis in Europe, but soon moved on to his most significant investment of time and effort.

Throughout his formative years, Gardner had become more familiar with contemporary pagan faiths, which were in a rudimentary form in the 1920s, borrowing both from ancient witchcraft and new ideas. He came to the conclusion that these were the surviving remnants of a witch cult that predated Christianity, as explained in the writings of author Margaret Murray. Gardner began to advocate the practice of paganism, including some of its rituals, in his fictional work *High Magic's Aid*, as he sought to revive the religion. He utilised the Key of Solomon, a Renaissance grimoire text, as a basis for much of his work, and began to put together his own volume of relevant information, known as *Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical*. Numerous Wiccan spells and incantations were written in the book, and Gardner later said that it was the basis for his *Book of Shadows*, a text that helped to popularise Wicca in the mid-20th century.

Gardner had travelled frequently to London and visited a nudist club called Spielplatz, and his interest in druidry had increased. He purchased land near the town of Bricket Wood and became active in another nudist enclave nearby. He later purchased an old building, deemed a 'witch's cabin', from a friend and brought it to Bricket Wood, where he held a sort of pagan ritual possibly based on ceremonial magic, founding the Bricket Wood coven during the 1940s. Its first members came from the nearby nudist colony.

Although the phrase 'Book of Shadows' has long been descriptive of a witch's personal volume that contains their own spells and rituals, Gardner explained that his book contained ancient information given to him as a member of the New Forest coven along with some of his own observations and contributions. While he asserted that much of the book was rooted in ancient witchcraft, a great portion of the *Book of Shadows* is believed to have originated with the *Key of Solomon*, *Aradia, or the Gospel of Witches*, which was written by Charles Godfrey Leland and based on an Italian coven, the writings of Crowley, and even poet Rudyard Kipling.

While observing the Midsummer ritual in 1953, Gardner initiated Doreen Valiente into Wicca, and she later became high priestess of the Bricket Wood coven. She assisted Gardner in the preparation of the *Book of Shadows* for publication and later made significant alterations to it after much of its content was deemed to have been lifted from other works. Nevertheless, Gardner had asserted that earlier witches had refrained from recording their rituals and incantations for fear of persecution. Later, however, as they began to do so, the *Book of Shadows* had become a significant text, raising the profile

> One of Gardner's high priestesses initially sold many of his possessions to Ripley's Believe It or Not! after his death

Defining moment

The family practitioners

Early 1907

Although his Anglican family has had little to do with their relatives, the Sergenesons, because the latter are Methodists, Gerald becomes enamoured with them as they are willing to discuss the paranormal with him and relate tales of such occurrences in their lives. From the Sergenesons, Gardner learns an old story that his grandfather had actually been a witch, and hears that one of his ancestors had been tried and found guilty of witchcraft in the early 1600s. That relative was burned for the crime. The time Gardner spends with these relatives fuels a growing interest in the occult, leading to further discoveries.

Timeline

1884

- **Gardner is born**
  On this date, Friday the 13th, Gerald Gardner is born into a wealthy family in Blundellsands, Lancashire, England. His father, William, and mother, Maria, have five sons and three daughters.
  13 June 1884

1888

- **Travels abroad begin**
  Gerald's ill health at age four prompts his nursemaid, Josephine 'Com' McCombie, to offer to take the boy abroad. Travels to France, the Canary Islands, the African coast and Madeira follow.
  Summer 1888

1923

- **A government employee**
  Gardner accepts a position in the Office of Customs in Malaya, travelling extensively as an inspector of the rubber industry. He becomes responsible for overseeing opium commerce and probably accepts bribes.
  September 1923

1927

- **Meeting a mystic**
  After travelling to Britain to visit his sick father, Gardner begins evaluating mysticism and experiences contact with dead relatives. One mystic apparently summons a deceased cousin, leaving a lasting impression on Gardner.
  28 July 1927

1927

- **A whirlwind courtship**
  Gardner marries Dorothea Frances Rosedale, known as Donna. The two have met only days earlier, coincidentally on the same evening that Gardner met the medium who conjured up his late cousin.
  16 August 1927

1936

- **Retirement and return to Britain**
  Gardner retires from the civil service, intending to remain in Malaya; however, Donna insists that they return to Britain, facilitating further adventures in the occult and Gardner's foray into Wicca.
  January 1936

1937

- **A doctoral degree**
  Perhaps compensating for his lack of formal education, Gardner purchases a doctoral degree of dubious academic value. He begins using the title 'Dr.' and makes further unsubstantiated academic claims in 1951.
  September 1937

This elaborately adorned and bound witch's personal *Book of Shadow*s resides in an individual's collection

This Wiccan altar includes such items as a cauldron emblazoned with a pentagram along with a ceremonial chalice

At this house in Highcliffe, Gerald Gardner is said to have been initiated into the New Forest coven

of Wicca in popular culture and subsequently attracting a growing number of followers during the 1950s and 60s.

Through the blend of ancient, contemporary and personal writings, tenets and perspectives, Gardner developed the modern Wicca religion and became known as its father. After the British government repealed its long-standing Witchcraft Laws in 1951, Gardner published *Witchcraft Today*, another popular text, three years later, and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* in 1959. Along with his close circle of friends, particularly Valiente, he led the transformation of modern witchcraft into the Wicca movement. Capitalising on the turbulent times, the principles of Wicca – including a break from traditional religion, growing interest in occultism and spirituality, and an emphasis on unconventional lifestyles and harmony with nature – grew in popularity in Britain, the United States, Continental Europe and Australia.

Gardner promoted Wicca at every opportunity, even inviting the media to write articles on the topic in the belief that publicity was the only way for the faith to grow. While some of the resulting public scrutiny was unfavourable, interest continued to expand. One of the most difficult aspects of Wicca emanates from its mystic, secretive nature. Throughout Western history, 'witches' were incorrectly associated with Satan, and Wiccans still struggle to get those unfamiliar with it to differentiate it from devil worship.

During his last years, Gardner continued to guide the Bricket Wood coven. He brought several high priestesses into the Wicca fold, including Valiente, Lois Bourne, Patricia Crowther and Eleanor Bone. He became a principal in the Museum of Magic and Witchcraft, then located on the Isle of Man, and associated with others who helped popularise Wicca, including author Robert Graves, whose book *The White Goddess* became a vehicle for the rising popularity of the religion.

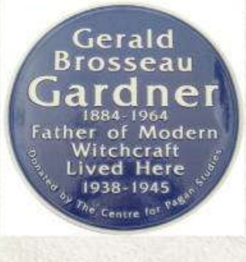
Gardner died in 1964 at the age of 79. As so often in his life, he was travelling at the time. Intending to visit Lebanon, he collapsed with a massive heart attack at the breakfast table one morning. He was buried in Tunisia.

Defining moment

Inspired by the theatre

August 1939

While residing in Highcliffe, Hampshire, the Gardners attend a play about the life of Pythagoras in a small theatre associated with the Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship. Although Donna dislikes the production, Gerald is inquisitive and begins attending local meetings of the mystic group. He soon becomes critical of many of its beliefs, particularly the claims made by its founder, Alexander Sullivan, that he is the reincarnation of several famous individuals. When a group leader declares that Britain will not become involved in World War II and the country declares war on Nazi Germany the following day, Gardner discounts the organisation's veracity.



Defining moment

Questions and comments

Summer 1953

Doreen Valiente reviews the *Book of Shadows* and questions Gardner's source material, particularly noting that some passages are similar to the writings of well-known occultist Aleister Crowley, while others may have been taken from the *Key of Solomon* – a text thought to have originated during the Renaissance – and other works rather than ancient sources as Gardner had represented. He reportedly admits that he has appropriated these materials to supplement his own writings and other available information included in the book. Valiente undertakes a substantial revision of the text, destined to become popular during the surge of interest in modern Wicca.

1939

- **Initiation into New Forest coven**
  Gardner is friendly with several Rosicrucian members, particularly Edith Woodford-Grimes, or 'Dafo'. They take him to a house owned by Dorothy Clutterbuck, 'Old Dorothy', where he is initiated into the New Forest coven.
  September 1939

1947

- **The Bricket Wood coven**
  Buying land at Bricket Wood near Hertfordshire, Gardner also purchases an old 'witch's cottage', and reassembles it there. During Midsummer, he hosts a ceremony and becomes founder of the Bricket Wood coven.
  21 June 1947

1951

- **Repeal of the Witchcraft Act**
  The British government repeals the Witchcraft Act of 1735, prompting Gardner to begin publishing his writings. The *Book of Shadows* becomes a prominent text during the growth of modern Wicca.
  22 June 1951

1953

- **Initiation of Doreen Valiente**
  After corresponding with Gardner since the prior year, Doreen Valiente requests initiation into the Bricket Wood coven during Midsummer observances. Although he hesitates at first, Gardner agrees. Doreen soon becomes high priestess.
  21 June 1953

1964

- **Death of Gardner**
  While travelling to Lebanon, Gardner dies aboard ship and is buried in Tunisia. Years later his grave is relocated and a plaque attached to it that reads, 'Father of Modern Wicca. Beloved of the Great Goddess.'
  12 February 1964

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THE
TRADITIONS

96 Trick or Treat!
100 Carving Pumpkins
104 How About Them Apples?
106 A Light Against the Dark
108 Soothsaying Superististions
110 The Dumb Supper
112 A Halloween Banquet
116 Halloween Costumes
118 Halloween Decorations
120 Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark
122 Haunted Houses
124 Modern Halloween

112

116

118

120

HOUSE
TERROR
RIP
RIP

122

124

Trick-or-treating is now predominantly the province of small children who dress up and go from door-to-door in groups on Halloween night

Trick or treat!

The ancient and modern origins of giving – and getting – gifts of candy on Halloween

Written by April Madden

There's a group of children on your doorstep. They're dressed in a ragged motley of black and white, as scruffy as wild birds, and as you open the door onto the evening rain they begin a chant that exhorts you to bring them cakes and nice things. If you don't, they'll play a trick on you. Not a bad one of course – they are, after all, only children. Just a little bit of mischief.

Are they trick-or-treaters? Far from it. It's the 5th century BCE, and you're on the Greek island of Rhodes. The children in front of you are singing a folk chant called the Swallow Song in a tradition that was apparently started by the great sage Cleobulus. To show your gratitude for the return of the migratory swallows, who mark the end of winter, you give the children the fruitcake and cheese and bread that they ask for, maybe even a swig of well-watered wine, and send them on their way. As the evening wears on you can hear bands of them, giggling and singing, weaving their celebratory way through the spring dark.

The singing of the Swallow Song is the earliest recorded instance of what today we call trick-or-treating, preserved by the 2nd century CE writer Athenaeus of Naucratis in his immense work the *Deipnosophistae*, a vast tract on food traditions, table manners, recipes, banqueting and much more. While the Swallow Song is not directly related to the medieval British and Irish practices that are the ancestors of the modern trick-or-treat tradition today, it points to a far older, deeper and wider cultural heritage for the practice of knocking on your neighbour's door and offering to swap chaos for candy.

Today trick-or-treating is very much in the province of what folklorists call childlore: the rhymes, rituals, games, stories and little mythologies created, shared and passed on by children. Once a certain, often indefinable age is reached, a teenager is considered too old to trick-or-treat unless escorting a gaggle of younger children; conceptually they go from mischievous to menacing, and accusations of vandalism and mayhem are never far behind. This wasn't always the case. In medieval times, the precursor to trick-or-treating was very much the province of adults.

Mumming is a practice that goes back to at least the early Middle Ages in Britain, and involves a group dressing up as figures from local or more widely known folklore, and travelling around their local area acting out small vignettes or scenes. The plays and characters changed with the seasons: at different times mummers might represent St George and the Dragon, Father Christmas, or a comedic Devil that jokingly menaced the audience for money. Their subject was often a ribald comedy based on a mystery play (a story with a religious allegory at its heart). The troupe would be known by different names depending on the time of year and the mumming play – at Easter they were pace-eggers, on Plough Monday

Trick-or-treating is often viewed as iconically American but in fact draws on multiple traditions from around the Old World

they might be plough-jacks or plough-witches. At Hallowtide they were soulers, and rather than travelling around the public parts of their local area and performing, they instead went from door-to-door offering blessings for the living and prayers for the dead in exchange for a very specific seasonal delicacy:

"A soul! a soul! a soul-cake!
Please good Missis, a soul-cake!
An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry,
Any good thing to make us all merry.
One for Peter, two for Paul
Three for Him who made us all"

Soul cakes are little flat scones, studded with dried fruit, seasoned with sweet spices and often marked with a cross, like a biscuit version of a hot cross bun. The cross marks them as alms, or a dole given out to those who ask for them; in return those asking for soul cakes promise to say prayers for the givers' dead, with the intention of speeding their spiritual progress from Purgatory to Heaven. A three-verse version of the Souling Song is recorded from Cheshire in 1891, in which the soulers additionally offer wishes for health, increase and fertility to the householders and their livestock in exchange for cakes, alcohol or money.

A similar custom to souling is found in Portugal. Known as Pão-por-Deus ('Bread for God') or in some instances Dia do Bolinho ('Cookie Day'), it's held on All Saint's Day (1 November). Children go out chanting "Pão-por-Deus!" and singing songs and are given buns, nuts and candy by householders – and occasionally shopkeepers – in return. Like treat-or-treating, there's payback for the ungenerous. If no treats are forthcoming the tone of the chants – previously sweet, complimentary songs invoking the cross and the saints – turn to insulting instead. One rhyme, in translation, says:

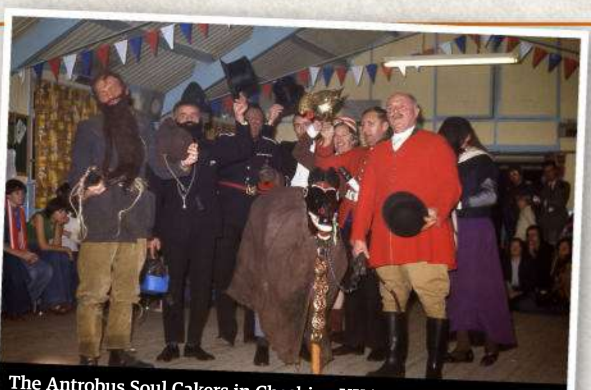
"This house smells of garlic
A scarecrow lives here.
This house smells like grease.
A dead person lives here.
Bread, bread for God's sake,
Fill my bag,
and I'll go away"

A jug depicting swallows from the Cycladic Bronze Age city of Akrotiri. The ancient Greek Swallow Song, celebrating spring, is the first recorded instance of trick-or-treating type activities

If casting aspersions don't work and they still don't get any treats, the 'trick' happens; an ill-wishing and conjuring of pestilence and hunger, in which the children sing:

"May the evil weevil,
strike you in the pot,
and leave you no
grain or bran left!"

In the original Portuguese, the chants rhyme and have a distinctive rhythm. In the Azores, an autonomous archipelago region off the North Atlantic coast of Portugal, the songs are slightly different, and the treats given out are skull-shaped cakes called caspiada. In both the Azores and the Portuguese mainland, the tradition is recorded as far back as the 15th century CE. Indeed, it's likely that it was Portuguese sailors of the 16th and 17th



The Antrobus Soul Cakers in Cheshire, UK in the 1970s. The characters in their mumming play are (left to right) Beelzebub, Doctor, Black Prince, Letter-In, Dairy Doubt, King George, Driver, Old Lady, and Dick the Wild Horse

Many confectionery manufacturers now make seasonal Halloween candy in lurid colours and spooky shapes as well as repurposing regular lines like gummy worms for trick-or-treating

centuries who exported the tradition much further afield – to the Philippines, where a very similar tradition is known as Pangangaluluwa.

Pangangaluluwa literally means 'souling' and is held on Halloween, All Saints' and All Souls' Day. This Tagalog tradition rewards groups dressed up as souls in Purgatory with treats made from sticky rice, purple yam or sweet potato. In this syncretic blend of Christian and pre-colonial traditions, it's believed that the dead hunger for food and attention on the special days when they can come closer to the mortal world, and that giving out treats will appease them. In this, it bears a lot of similarities to ghost festival practices throughout Asia.

Dressing up as spectres is another common factor in trick-or-treating traditions. Guising – putting on a costume and going from house to house – is first recorded in 16th century Scotland and soon spread to the rest of Britain and Ireland. In some parts of Ireland, Halloween saw a similar tradition to the Welsh Christmastime practice of the Mari Lwyd. A man dressed up as a Láir Bhán ('White Mare') would lead a group around the neighbourhood reciting verses in exchange for treats. These hobby-horses are no childhood toy: fashioned from white sheets and horse skulls with one or more people dancing, shouting and asking riddles beneath, they're a macabre and unsettling sight.

The word 'guising' had certainly made its way to North America long before it first appeared there in print in 1911: it was a mainstream tradition considerably before that. Shortly after 1870, when President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday in the USA, it became a New York tradition for children to dress in scruffy or scary costumes on 'Ragamuffin Day' and go out asking for candy. By the 1930s this had been deliberately subsumed into organised Thanksgiving Day parades with children walking dressed in elaborate, not necessarily spooky, outfits – Disney characters were popular costumes – in an attempt to control what was seen by many Manhattanites as a nuisance. The Ragamuffin Parade tradition continued in the outer boroughs, however, and in parts of New Jersey and Westchester County.

The modern-day term term 'trick-or-treat' first pops up in an article published in the *Lethbridge Herald* in Alberta, Canada on 4 November 1927. Referring to the Halloween festivities in a small town called Blackie, it details how groups of children crying "Trick or treat!" had great fun roaming the village and knocking at doors, and if treats weren't forthcoming they took barrels, gates, wheels and even wagons from yards and left them in the street. But where did the term come from before that? We just don't know. Perhaps it had been used in that part of Alberta for a while, but only recorded in 1927. Or maybe a small group of Canadian kids indulging in an ancient pastime thought up a new, catchy candy chant, and invented a phrase that has become famous worldwide. Like many Halloween customs, its earliest inception remains a mystery.

Sugar skulls

In Mexico, Day of the Dead (Día de Muertos) is celebrated on All Souls Day, 2 November. Like the Filipino Pangangaluluwa it's a blend of local pre-Christian traditions with Roman Catholic ones, in this case those of the Aztecs and the 15th century Spanish conquistadors. Its most well-known tradition worldwide is the calavera, or skull ornament.

Calaveras have been made in their current form since the 1630s from either clay or from a sugar sweet known as alfeñique, which dates back to Spain's Al-Andalus era (711-1492 CE). Alfeñique's original Arabic name is al-fanid, and it was used as a cough drop. The sugar paste concoction lends itself well to being sculpted, and was readily adapted to Spanish-American culture, most famously to create sugar skulls. The traditional ones are decorative and are not meant to be eaten.

Calaveras were originally an offering for a family's home altar (ofrenda), which is set up on the Day of the Dead to welcome any newly deceased to the celebration and to venerate the ancestral dead. When used in this context, they usually have the deceased's name written on the forehead. Candy and toy sugar skulls are now also given to children.

The traditional use for calavera is to display them on a family's ofrenda, or altar, on Día de Muertos, to honour the dead

The first recorded instance of the phrase "Trick or treat!" was in Blackie, Alberta, Canada, in 1927. Nobody knows where they got it from, or if they made it up on the spot

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Carving Pumpkins

The strange stories and ancient folk beliefs that led to a simple orange vegetable becoming the most recognisable symbol of Halloween

Written by April Madden

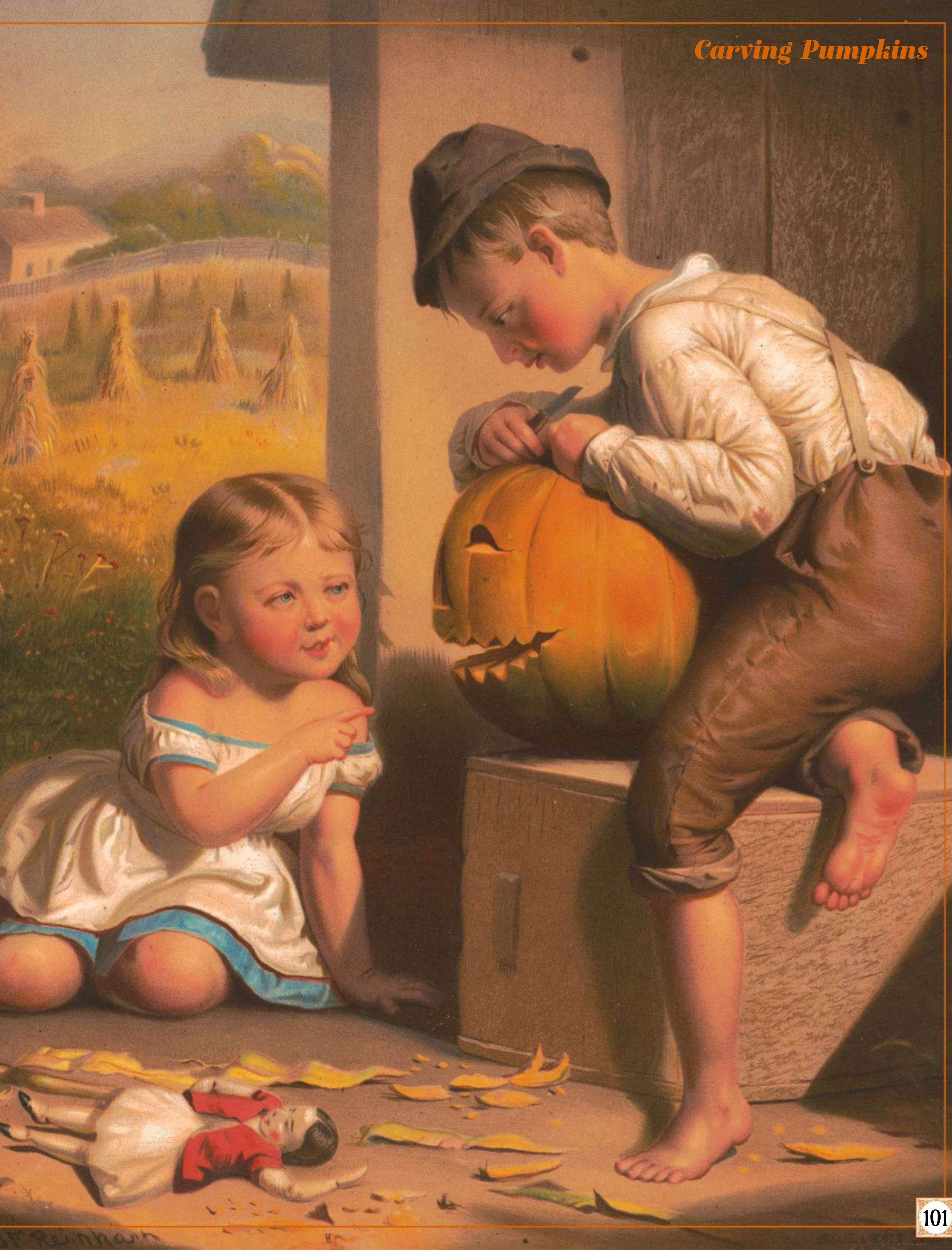
One of the most common symbols of Halloween is the grotesquely carved pumpkin. They are so popular that special varieties are grown to be easy to carve, pleasingly shaped and vibrantly orange. Supermarkets sell millions every year. But where did the carved pumpkin – or Jack O'Lantern, to give it its proper name – come from, and why has it become a symbol of spooky season?

An Irish folk tale tells the story of a tinker known as Stingy Jack. There are several iterations of the story, which dates to the 17th or 18th century, but in the most common variant Jack ran into the Devil, and invited the fiend to have a drink with him. Jack told the Devil that he didn't want to pay for their drinks and had devised a trick so that they wouldn't have to. The Devil readily agreed, so when Jack told him to turn himself into a coin, he did. Jack then put the coin in his pocket next to his rosary, and the godly symbol prevented the Devil from turning back into his fiendish form. Eventually Jack agreed to move the coin away from the crucifix so that the Devil could change back into his proper shape, but only after extracting a promise that the Devil would leave Jack alone for a year.

A year later, the Devil returned for his revenge. Jack was busy picking apples, and explained that he would be ready for his punishment as soon as he'd finished. He was having trouble, he said, reaching the apples at the top of the tree; maybe if the Devil could help him with those, then he'd be finished quicker and ready to atone sooner. The Devil assented and climbed into the treetop. Jack promptly carved a cross into the tree trunk, trapping the Devil in its branches. This time he extracted two promises: one, that the Devil would leave him alone for ten years; and two, that the Devil would never claim his soul. With no other way out, the Devil agreed. Other, more violent versions of the tale have Jack trapping the Devil in a chair or a bag and beating him with a blackthorn stick until he relents.

Soon after the ten years were up, Jack died. He had behaved too badly in life to be allowed into Heaven, but Hell refused to admit him – quite apart from the bargain over his soul, the Devil, not unreasonably, never wanted to see Jack again. He scooped up one of the burning coals of Hell and handed it to Jack, condemning him to wander at night for eternity with only the ember to light his way. Jack carved a turnip and put it inside, and for that, his wandering ghost became known as Jack O'Lantern – a slang term for a night watchman.

The tale is thought to have provided a fanciful, fairytale explanation for the phenomenon of will o' the wisps, a common sight in pre-industrial rural Ireland. The wandering soul motif has a strong conceptual overlap with Halloween, but Stingy Jack's tale also has deeper roots in one of the oldest known story forms, that of a craftsman overcoming the trickery of an evil

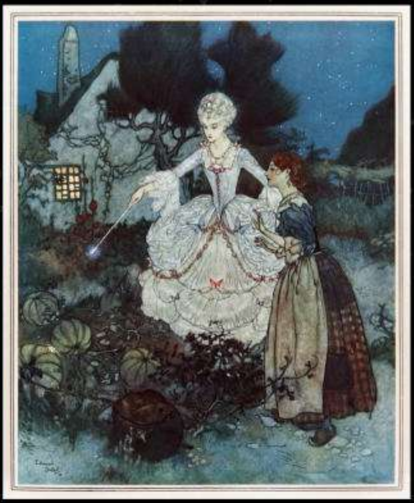


A pumpkin outside your front door on Halloween is often seen as a sign that trick-or-treaters are welcome, so make sure to stock up on candy if you display one!

A royal connection

Another iconic pumpkin is the one in the story of Cinderella, which her fairy godmother transforms into a carriage to take her to the ball. There are endless versions of the Cinderella tale, but only one has the pumpkin coach: Charles Perrault's *Cendrillon ou la Petite Pantoufle de Verre* ('Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper'), written in 1697.

Perrault was the Minister for Building Works for the French king Louis XIV, and one of his responsibilities was overseeing the creation and management of the Potager du Roi – the King's Kitchen Garden – at Versailles. This famous garden had an almost magical reputation – its designer, Jean-Baptiste de la Quintinie, sowed it with all manner of exotic fruits and vegetables, including pumpkins (which he also devoted a section of his treatise on gardening to) and developed techniques for ripening produce weeks before it was in season anywhere else. To Perrault's audience, the king's pumpkins already had a whiff of the supernatural; his mention of this new and unusual vegetable brought that to the rest of the world. The garden that influenced him was so beloved of France's 17th century literary set that it pops up in another magical story, *The White Cat* by Madame d'Aulnoy, who invented the term 'fairy tale'.



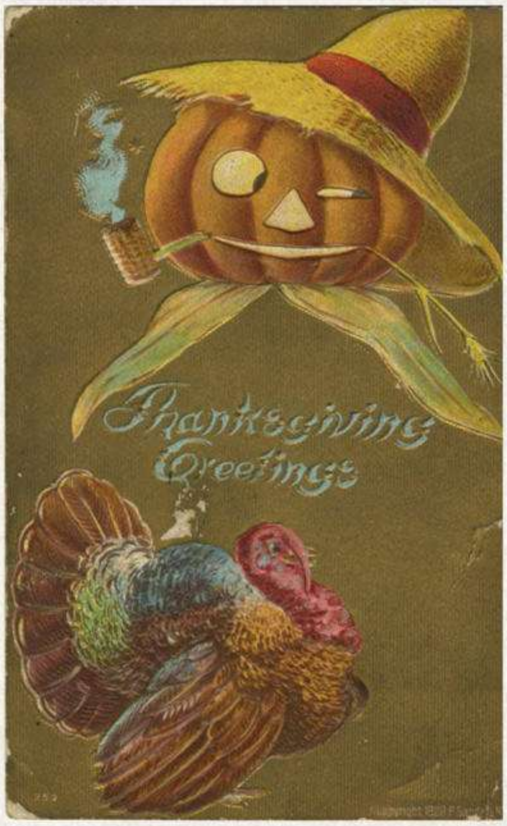
In the most well-known version of Cinderella today, the pumpkin is a hint that something magical is about to happen

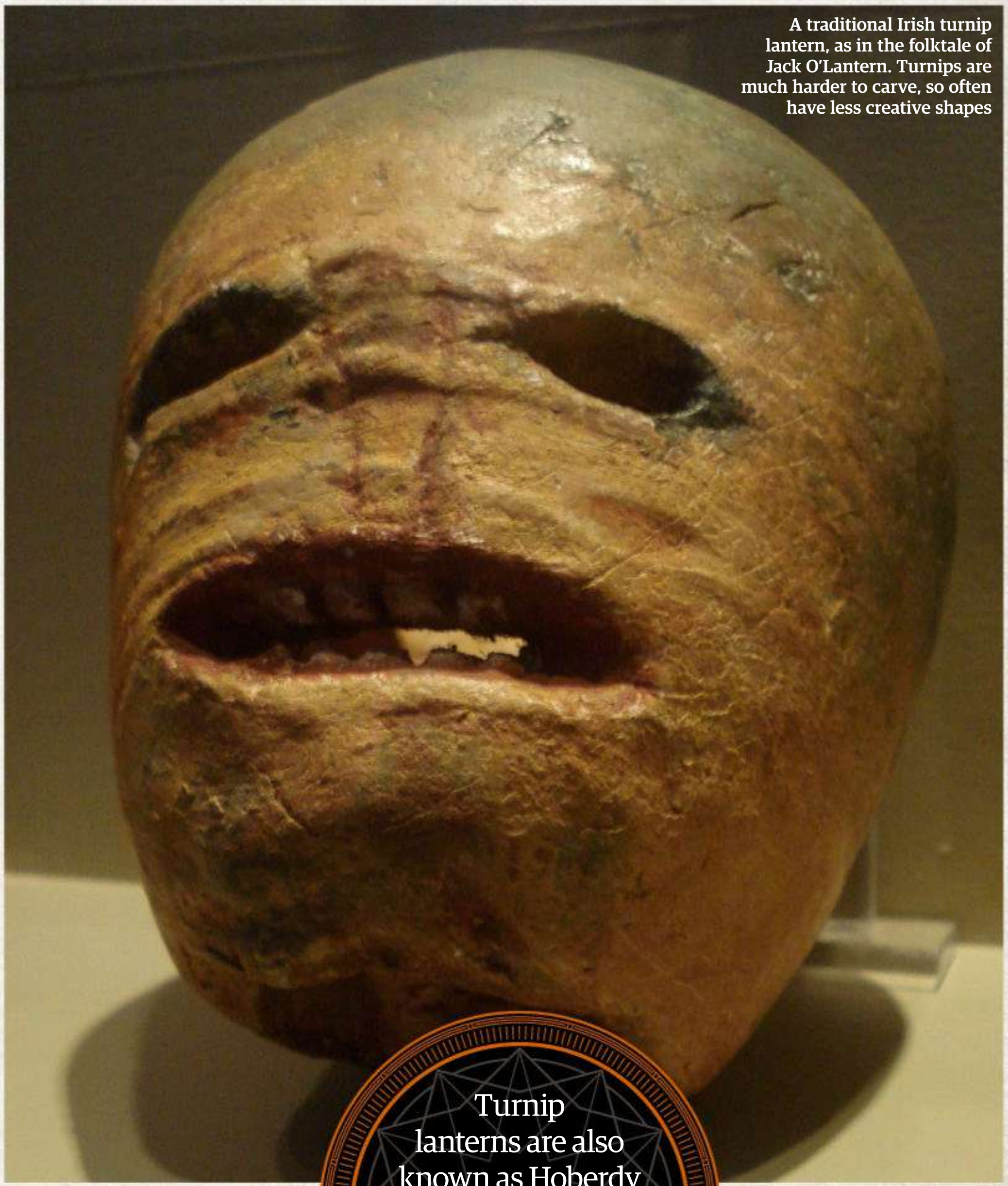
spirit. In western Europe, the most well-known of these tales is St Dunstan and the Devil. Like tinker Jack the 10th century St Dunstan was a metalworker; unlike Jack, he was a devout holy man, and he used his blacksmithing tools to grab the fiend by the nose and menace him into leaving St Dunstan's congregation alone. This element of the story is also an excellent fit for Halloween mythology, when it was thought that the boundaries between the physical and spiritual worlds are more porous. Both examples show a human – one who works with fire, a key element of ancient Halloween celebrations – scaring off the forces of evil, whether through base cunning like Stingy Jack or through fervent holiness like St Dunstan. Where the stories differ, however, is in the unique motif of the turnip lantern. At first glance, it seems nonsensical. So why did Stingy Jack choose a turnip head to carry his hellfire when he could have chosen anything else?

Ancient Celtic art is full of heads. They worm through knotwork designs and poke out of old masonry. What is known as the Head Cult can be traced back through pre-Celtic settlements to at least Mesolithic times. Roman writers record that Celtic warriors took the heads of their foes as trophies and displayed them on spikes outside their settlements, or embalmed and preserved them as relics. Celtic artisans carved heads into porticoes and friezes; they grin from the ends of torc necklaces and bracelets, where they were thought to ward off evil influences. The head was venerated as the seat of wisdom, poetry and art; the conduit through which gods spoke to men and the symbol of divinity. In Ireland, the additional influence of Norse myth would have added stories like that of Mimir, the severed head that dwells in a well whose waters impart knowledge, and who whispers secrets to Odin, ruler of the gods. A warrior's gathering of enemy heads was referred to as 'Macha's nut harvest' after one aspect of the triple goddess of war; in Celtic myth nuts, like heads, are associated with wisdom and knowledge. With the ancient festival of Samhain being associated with death, it's likely that head icons, or even the real thing, made an appearance in its rites.

Turnips with carved faces were a vestige of this ancient pre-Christian head cult, and were displayed in windows or doorways in Ireland and some parts of Scotland, Wales and England at Hallowtide to scare off evil spirits. Images and icons thought to do this are called apotropaic, and include imagery like the evil eye, Gorgon's head,

> "Why did Stingy Jack choose a turnip head to carry his hellfire?"




A traditional Irish turnip lantern, as in the folktale of Jack O'Lantern. Turnips are much harder to carve, so often have less creative shapes

and the abstract patterned 'witch marks' found in old buildings. The evil-repelling Celtic vegetable head, then, is where Jack got his turnip lantern. The problem, as anyone who has ever tried to make a traditional one will attest, is that turnips are really difficult to carve. If only there was something easier…

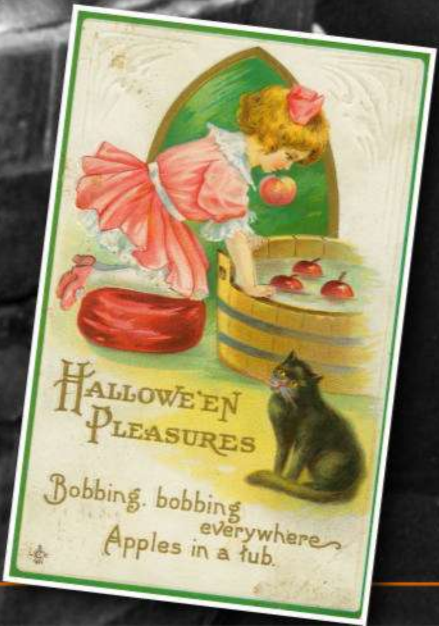
When European settlers arrived in what would become the United States of America in the 16th century, they were introduced to a wealth of fruit and vegetables that they had never encountered before. In their hardscrabble, famine-riddled communities, the prevalence of the 'Three Sisters' – a Native American companion planting system of corn, beans and squash – would have rapidly boosted the integration of Indigenous foods into their diet. In the earliest settlements in what is today Massachusetts, the most common squash was referred to by English settlers as pompion (from the Latin word for melon). In the Massachusett language of the locals, it was pôhpukun – 'grows round'. Today we know them as pumpkins.

The settlers who first arrived in Massachusetts were predominantly Puritans, and as we saw on page 38, their beliefs about Halloween were different to those of other Christians at the time. They preserved very few of its older folkloric traditions and concentrated on their self-imposed idea that it was evil. They were very concerned with evil, with the threat of witches and malefic influences, and would adopt and adapt any folk magic practices they thought would keep evil away. The stories of the tricksy tinker and have-a-go holy man wouldn't have swayed them – the settlement of Massachusetts predates the first recorded instance of the Stingy Jack tale by at least a century, although it's probably older, while St Dunstan would have smacked of Catholicism and therefore moral corruption. Bizarrely, it's the apotropaic echo of the Celtic Head Cult, likely brought to the fledgling settlements by Protestant 'Scotch-Irish' immigrants escaping persecution by Catholics, that would have appealed to the Puritans' stringent, frightened sensibilities. The idea of warding off demons, witches and ghouls with a turnip lantern slotted seamlessly into their existing superstitions about Halloween. Turnips, however, were an Old World crop that was hard to come by in their new home, while pumpkins were relatively abundant. The practical Puritans subbed in what they had to hand, and the Jack O'Lantern's modern form was born.

> Turnip lanterns are also known as Hoberdy Lanterns, suggesting a connection with household spirits called hobs

By the 1820s the pumpkin lantern was iconically American, with its starring role in Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and its position as a spooky forerunner of Thanksgiving. And by the middle of the 20th century, modern farming methods meant that the USA could export the Jack O'Lantern tradition back to its ancestral home countries – having given it a bigger, brighter, all-American makeover in the intervening centuries.

The Addams Family episode *Halloween - Addams Style* from 1965 featured Uncle Fester indulging in the traditional party game of bobbing for apples using a barrel of water


HALLOWE'EN
PLEASURES
Bobbing, bobbing
everywhere
Apples in a tub.

A Halloween postcard circa 1900 showing a young girl apple-bobbing and her cat attempting to avoid getting splashed by water

How About Them Apples?

Apple-bobbing has become synonymous with Halloween, but what is it and why do we take part in this curious activity?

Written by Alice Pattillo

The reason why apples hold such an importance at Halloween may have something to do with the Celts and their festival of Samhain. The apple was a sacred fruit to the Celtic people, featuring in numerous myths and legends, and happened to be ripe for the picking at the end of harvest season, making them lush and plentiful by the time Samhain was celebrated on 31 October. But folks weren't content with simply eating them, nor just sipping them in their 'lamb's wool' (a traditional winter concoction made of ale and spiced apples), they would use them for entertainment – in the many forms of apple-bobbing – as well as for divination purposes.

Apple-bobbing, also known as apple-ducking, appears to have been a popular pastime across Britain dating back to at least the late-medieval period, and it remains a prevalent Halloween custom to this day. It is unclear if apple bobbing served as a fortune-telling ritual, but seeing as so many customs performed at Halloween did, and many of these divination rituals used apples or apple pips, it's easy to deduce that it might very well have in the past.

There are many conflicting interpretations of how to bob for apples, the most common of which is to place a number of apples into a vessel filled with water and attempt to retrieve one as they float, bobbing up and down on the surface, with only the use of your mouth. Variations include the addition of a coin or prize inserted into one of the apples, dropping a fork from above and attempting to spear one (rather than biting it) and hanging the apples on a piece of string and attempting to eat them while they are suspended, with your hands tied behind your back.

There was also a riskier activity called snap-apple, which is often also referred to as apple-bobbing in Victorian texts, which involved attaching an apple to one end of a suspended stick and a lit candle to the other. The stick would then be spun and the participant would attempt to dive at the apple, their hands again bound, and bite a chunk of apple rather than finish up with a mouthful of hot wax. Snap-apple was so popular that by the 18th century Halloween became known as 'Snap-apple Night' in many areas of England, and 'Snotching Night' in Wales, in reference to the same game. A variation of snap-apple was recorded in Cornwall, performed as part of their Allantide (or Cornish version of Samhain 'Kalan Gwav', meaning first day of winter) celebrations, and likely enacted in other areas of the country too. Here, they would suspend two pieces of wood in the shape of a cross, with a candle sat on top at each extremity and apples strung beneath. The object was to consume an entire apple without being hit by the hot melted wax as it dripped down from the candles.

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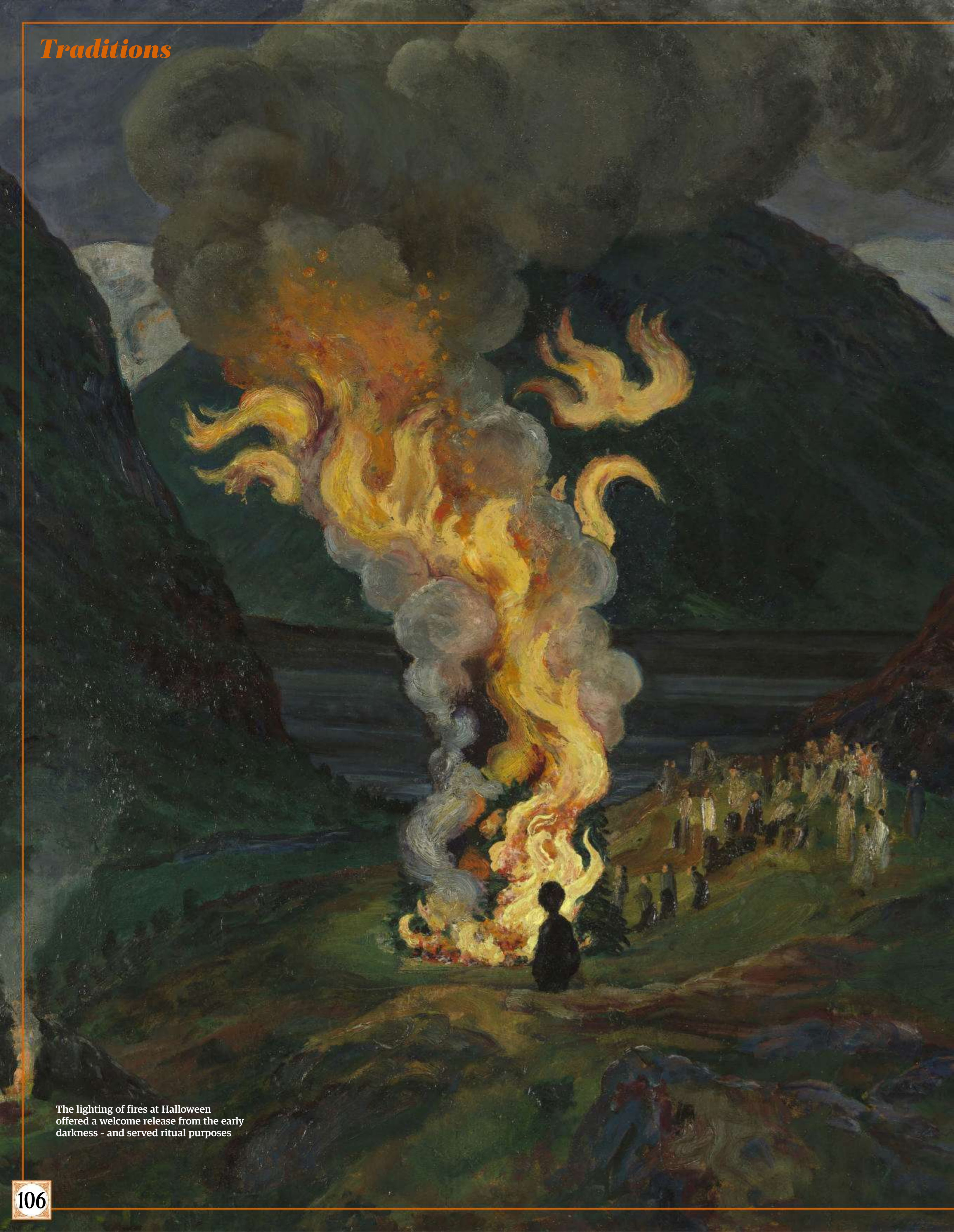


The lighting of fires at Halloween offered a welcome release from the early darkness - and served ritual purposes

A Light Against the Dark

With the long nights of winter closing in, Halloween has long been marked by fires to keep the darkness at bay

Written byBen Gazur

Fire is humanity's oldest ally against the terrors of the dark. Around the world people light bonfires, candles, and lamps to drive off the darkness that comes with winter. The festivities of Halloween are often accompanied by the flickering light of flames.

Samhain, the Celtic festival which begins at sunset on 31 October, has always been marked with fire. Medieval texts refer to the feasts and celebrations around Samhain and also mention the sacred fires that were lit by the ancient Druids. It seems that the fires in each hearth were extinguished and then relit from the flames of the sacred fire to bring the sanctified flame inside each individual home.

The fires lit at Samhain were often placed on hilltops. Those viewing them from the surrounding countryside would have seen a glow on the horizon that mimicked the rising Sun. At a time of the year when the nights are growing in length these fires offered the promise that the sun would return. The bonfires create the illusion of a longer day but also acted as a form of sympathetic magic to encourage the return of the Sun.

The fires also provided a centre for the focus of celebration. Samhain, and later Halloween, bonfires provided a place for a community to gather and enjoy one last festival before the arrival of winter. Games were played around the fires and food roasted for the crowd to enjoy. Even into the 19th century however the flames themselves continued to hold their magical properties. In northern Scotland boys were known to lay down as close to the fire as they dared and let the smoke drift over them, to prove their bravery and receive its protection. In some places a pair of fires were lit and cattle driven between them to ensure the animals thrived.

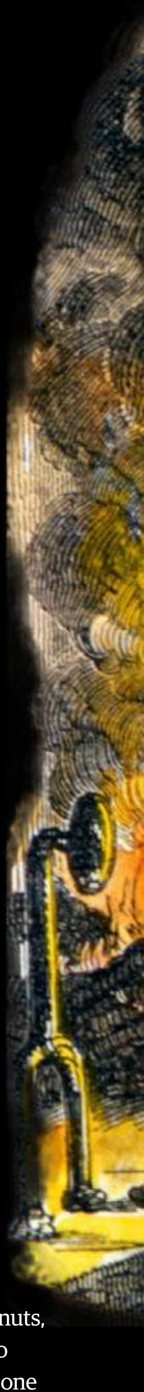
Bonfires were not the only way of using fire to celebrate Halloween. Small bits of wood would be set alight in the family hearth and carried outside by the members of the household. The family would then walk around their property with the flames and cast them towards the boundary of their land to protect it from harm.

Torchlit processions through towns still take place but perhaps the most recognisable fires associated with Halloween are the candles found in pumpkins. This use of candles in vegetables has a long history. Before pumpkins were commonplace children would carve faces on turnips and mangle wurzels - often with deeply unsettling results.

Soothsaying Superstitions

As Hallowtide was regarded as a highly spiritual period it proved an opportunity to peer into one's future, and folklore is full of tips and tricks on how to practise fortune telling at this psychically potent time

Written by Alice Pattillo



Forebodings of death

With the dangerous season of winter upon the horizon, early Halloween divination rituals were naturally most concerned with death and discovering who would make it through the harsh winter ahead.

There were many supposed ways in which you could discover who was going to die during the incoming season. A popular custom was to spread the ash of the hearth before retiring to bed at night, and check for marks in the dusk when you return in the morning – any coffin shapes indicated a death in the household. A more elaborate ritual in North Wales and the Scottish Highlands was to start a bonfire some way from your house. Each member of the family would toss a marked pebble in the ashes. If you returned in the morning to find your stone was missing, you were doomed to die.

Looking for love

By the 20th century, Hallowtide fortune-telling was less about the deathly horror that awaits you in the coming season, and more about romance. Numerous similarly fashioned rituals occured across the US, the UK and Ireland using barley, sleeves dipped in water, cabbages and more. Here are some of the most popular.

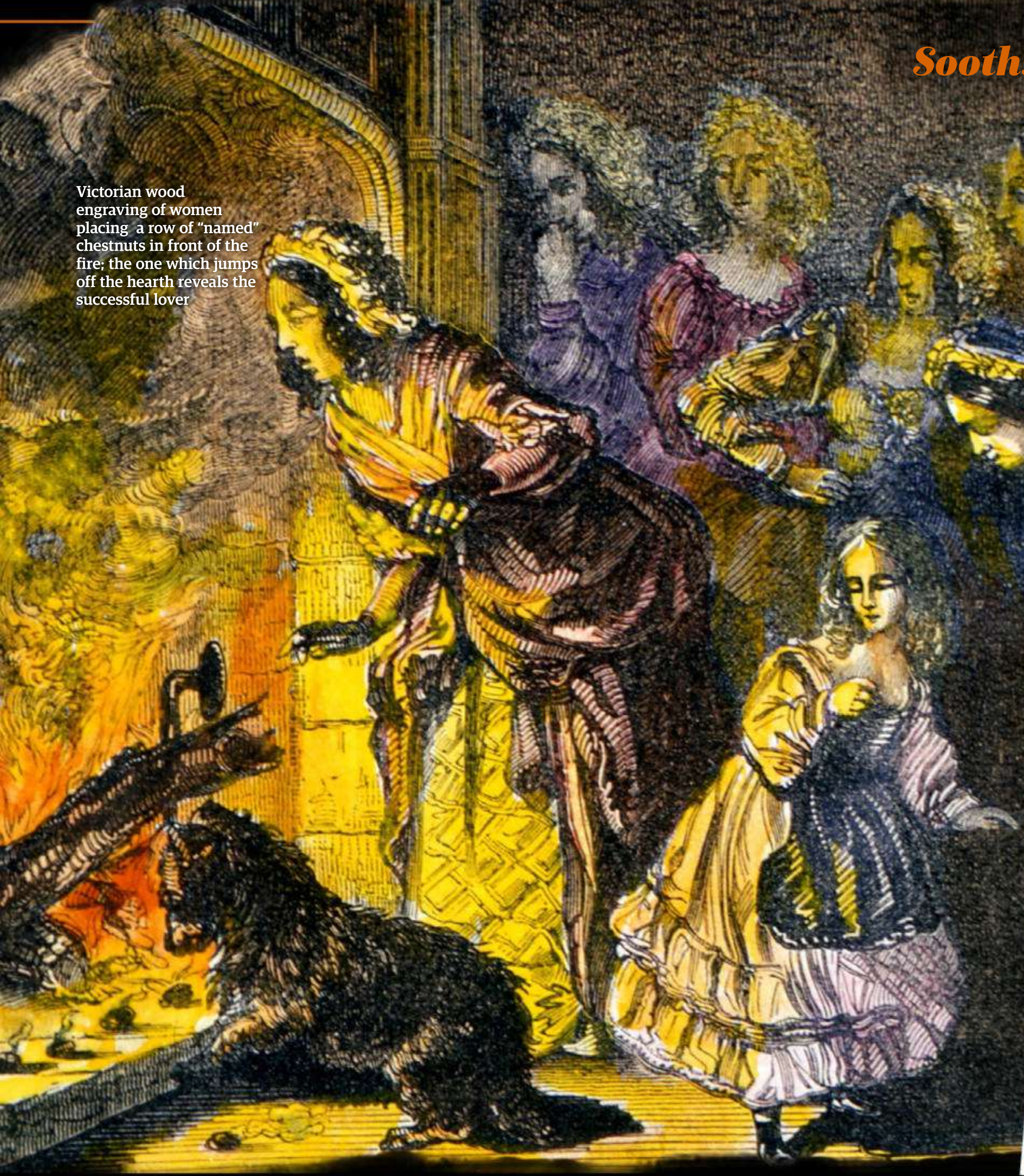
Nut-crack Night

In some areas of Britain, Halloween adopted the title Nut-crack Night thanks to some nutty divination rituals. One involved casting hazelnuts, each one nominated with a suitor's name, into the hearth fire and watching them burn. The one that shone brightest and for longest was the true partner, while those that exploded or were charred to smithereens were unfaithful or untrustworthy. Another version of this ritual was to allocate the names of a would-be couple to two nuts and toss them in the flames together. If they burst apart, the love was doomed.

The apple of my eye

Young women had another way to discover their intended beau, however. They were encouraged to peel the skin off an apple in one long piece. Once the peel drops, it's supposed to form the first

"By the 20th century Hallowtide fortune-telling was about romance"



Victorian wood engraving of women placing a row of "named" chestnuts in front of the fire; the one which jumps off the hearth reveals the successful lover

initial of your true love's name. Apple pips were given the names of friends and stuck to your face. The ones that fell off quickly were untrustworthy foes, while those pips that clung to your forehead were friends who were loyal and true.

Mirror mirror

Sometimes, a mere apple wasn't adequate for discovering your soul mate. Some traditions involved peering into a mirror with an apple in hand (or while eating one), and often at the same time as brushing your hair, at midnight. The image of the future spouse face would then appear in the mirror. A more elaborate version involved lighting a candle in a dimly lit room and cutting the apple into nine pieces, eating them slowly, making sure to finish the last piece at midnight, at which time your destined partner's face would appear in the mirror behind you.

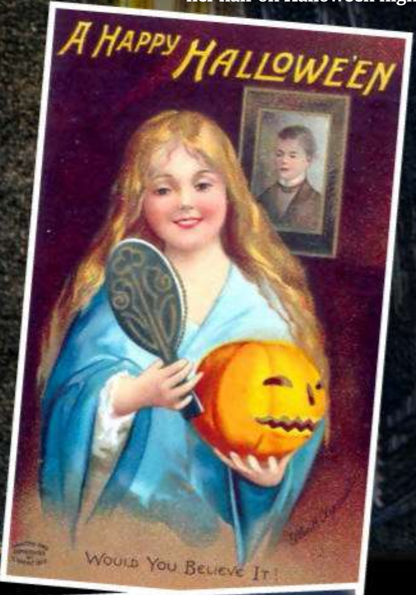
Luggies

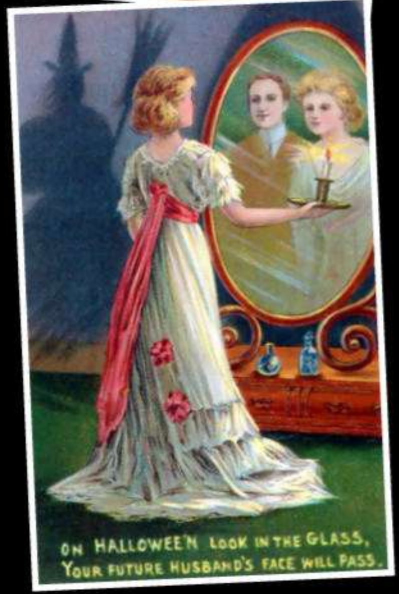
Luggie bowls were small bowls with handles. To discover your fate on Halloween night, a person would be blindfolded and guided over to three luggie bowls. Two bowls would be filled with water, one clean (indicating you'd wed a virgin) and one dirty (you'd wed a widow or widower) and another empty (you wouldn't marry). Whichever you put your hands into was your destiny.

Barmbrack

This traditional Irish fruit bread, still eaten today, was baked with a metal ring inside at Hallowtide. If you were lucky enough to discover the ring in your slice (needless to say, you had to eat it carefully!) you'd marry that year. A similar fortune-telling treat was the Scottish bannock cake. Taken to bed and placed under your pillow, it could bring visions of your future beloved.

A 1904 Halloween greeting card depicting a young girl hoping to catch a glimpse of her fated lover by looking into a mirror while brushing her hair on Halloween night




On Hallowe'en look in the glass,
Your future husband's face will pass.

An early 20th century greetings card showing a woman peering into the mirror by candlelight to see her future husband's face appear

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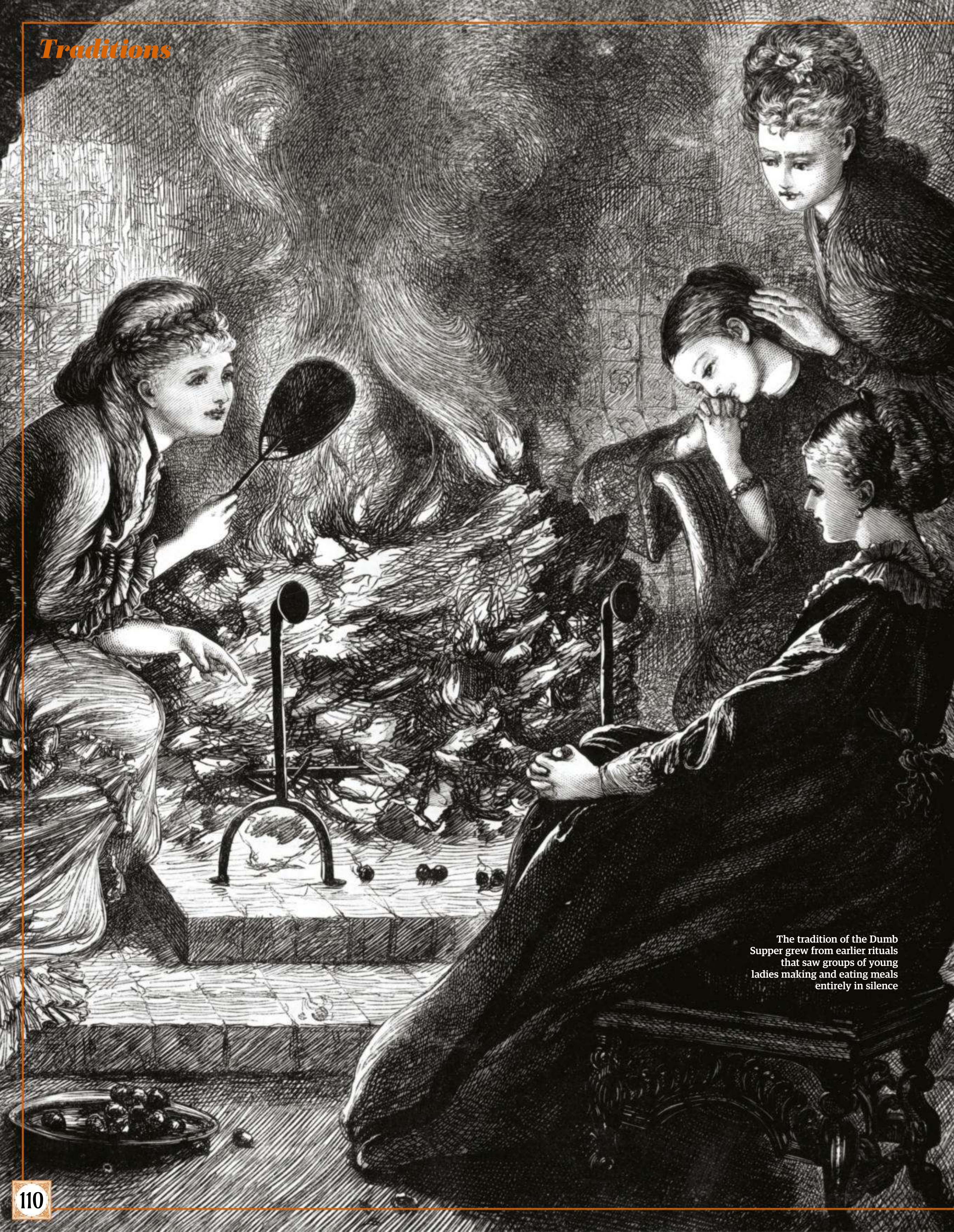

The tradition of the Dumb Supper grew from earlier rituals that saw groups of young ladies making and eating meals entirely in silence

The Dumb Supper

While the dead may be gone from the everyday world, there are rituals designed to help the living communicate with, and feed them

Written by Ben Gazur

Food and the dead are intricately linked in many cultures. Offerings of food and wine left at the tombs of ancestors was thought to bring happiness and nourishment to those who have departed. Some food rituals however invite the dead to a more intimate meal.

The Dumb Supper, as the name suggests, is a meal that is held in total silence. Silence is a common part of death rituals as it offers a form of sensory deprivation that opens the mind to other thoughts and feelings. Silence is not the only peculiarity of the meal; the table is laid with the cutlery the wrong way round, chairs face backwards, and the courses are reversed with pudding served first. By offering a reflected version of a meal the spirits of the dead are thought to be more able to partake in the fare.

Guests to the Dumb Supper often bring mementoes of the departed to strengthen the connection between the living and the dead. By holding the Dumb Supper at Halloween when the partition between the world and the afterlife is considered to be at its most permeable, communication with the dead is supposed to be easiest.

The tradition of the Dumb Supper as a means of communing with the dead is strongest in America but grew out of older British rituals. In the English incarnation the Dumb Supper was not about the dead but a way of divining who a future lover would be. Girls who wanted to glimpse their future husbands would prepare a meal in total silence in an empty house. At the completion of the meal a spectral form of their spouse would join the party at the table.

The modern tradition of the Dumb Supper as a method of honouring the dead is performed by many neopagans and witches in North America. The reversed dinner experience and the silence are maintained but other actions are sometimes added to the ritual. Some practitioners sanctify the space where the dinner is held by casting a circle with salt around it. The seat at the head of the table is left empty as an invitation to the dead and food is served for all guests, both living and dead. Many guests bring notes for the departed to read during the meal. At the close of the meal those present will pause at the chair occupied by the dead to say a final goodbye.

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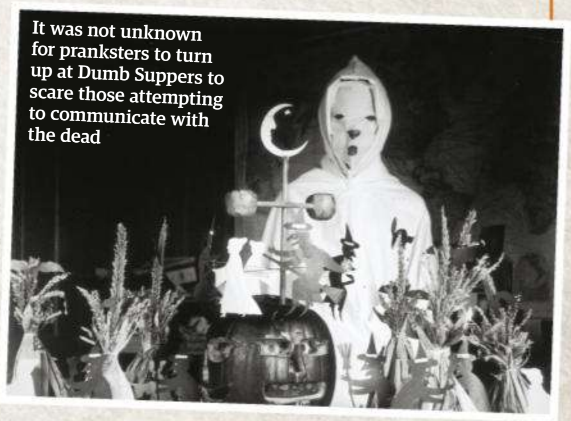


It was not unknown for pranksters to turn up at Dumb Suppers to scare those attempting to communicate with the dead

Candy apples make use of the plentiful apples at Halloween but add a delicious shell of tooth-cracking sugar

A Halloween Banquet

Halloween is not just a time for spooky phantoms. It's also an opportunity to feast on delicious treats

Written by Ben Gazur

Halloween has always been a festival surrounded by food. The dark nights which the bonfires of Halloween drive away have been associated with feasting and food magic from the earliest times. Food that is consumed around Halloween is not just a meal however; it is steeped in tradition, folklore, and meaning.

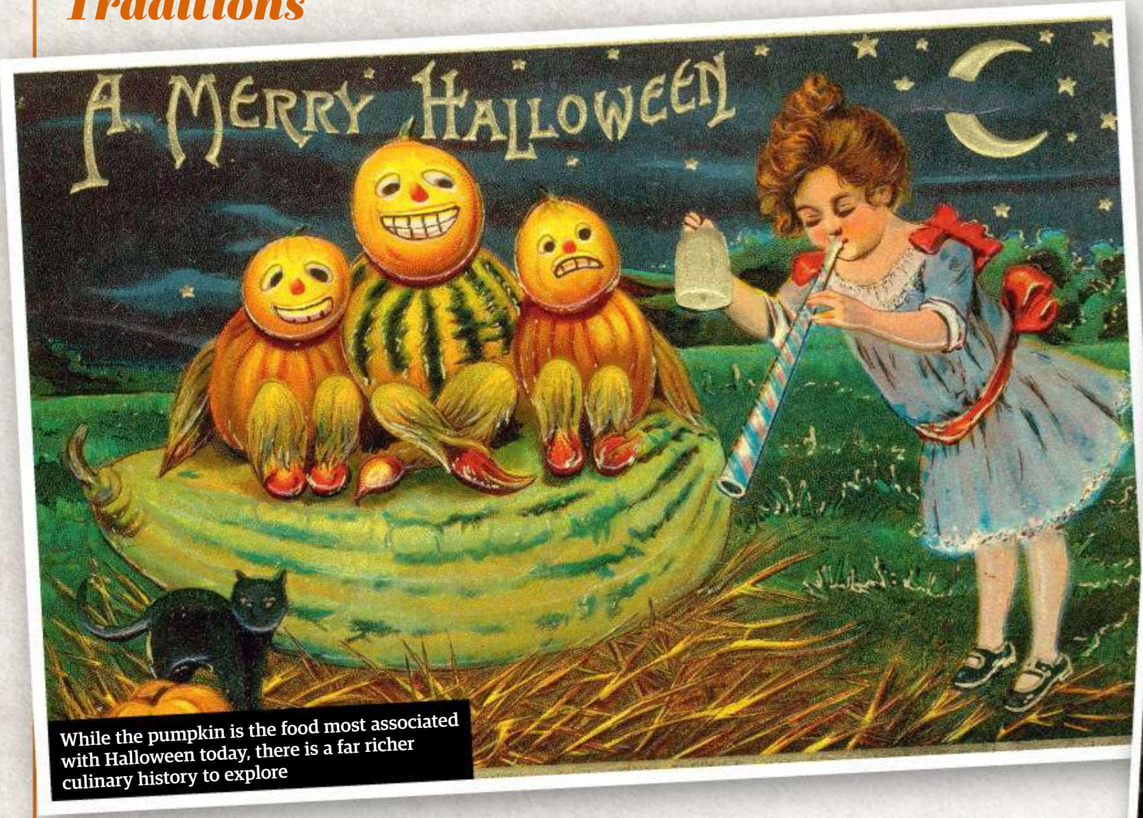
The origins of Halloween are almost certainly pagan and pre-Christian but in its modern incarnation it is tied to the calendar of the church. Halloween derives from All Hallow's Eve – the night before All Saints Day when the memory of the saints is celebrated. In the Middle Ages a feast day was preceded by a day of fasting. Fasting was used to make worshippers more holy but would also have increased the festivities of the following day. Hunger is an excellent sauce for any meal.

The saying "fast before you feast" was a Catholic reality from at least the 11th century until Vatican II in 1965 removed the requirement for observant Catholics to hold a fast on the day before major church events. The fast was not a total abstention from all food but a restriction of the types of food that could be eaten. There was to be no meat on Halloween. This perhaps explains why many of the foods eaten today at Halloween are sweet little treats and not substantial meals.

Hop-tu-naa is the traditional Celtic celebration on the Isle of Man on the day of Halloween. Here too the traditional foods avoid meat. One such dish is mrastyr, which is made of potatoes, parsnips, and fish, served as a mash with butter. It is not just human celebrants that get to eat this – dishes of mrastyr are left out for the fairies at night.

Giving out food on Halloween is not the modern tradition many people think it is. Trick-or-treaters calling at the door and demanding treats is just a modern version of a much older tradition. Perhaps the first food that was doled out on Halloween was the soul cake.

Soul cakes, or Soulmass cakes, are biscuits given out in memory of those who have died. Sometimes simply called 'souls', these cakes



While the pumpkin is the food most associated with Halloween today, there is a far richer culinary history to explore

Soul cakes have been distributed since at least the medieval period to encourage prayers for the dead

are sweet biscuits studded with dried fruit and marked with a cross on the top. The soul cakes were not simply given out to those who asked for them, however – you had to sing for your supper.

Soulers would travel from door to door and sing a song to encourage those inside to offer them a cake. The giving and receiving of soul cakes was a religious act. Those who begged for the cakes were making a promise to offer prayers for the dead. Those who gave cakes were doing so in the memory of those they had lost, to ease their passage into Heaven. This tradition was found all across Europe from the Middle Ages onward.

In Portugal children gather to sing and beg for Pão-por-Deus – Bread for God. It is not just bread that the children get. Some beg for cookies, cupcakes, and other dainties. The song that is sung by the children explicitly states that the food they are given is for those who are dead and buried. Those who refuse to hand out food get ridiculed in song: "This house smells of garlic, a scarecrow lives here."

In Mexican tradition Pan de Muerto – Bread of the Dead – is eaten on the Day of the Dead around Halloween. These sweet loaves are marked with bones and sometimes a tear to show that the dead are still mourned. In Italy, Pan dei Morti are chocolate-flavoured treats that are eaten to commemorate the dead. Some are also offered to the spirits of the departed.

Other traditional Halloween foods were used for prognostication instead of commemoration. In Ireland, barmbrack, a type of light fruit cake, is baked with a small item like a ring or coin stirred into it. When the cake is sliced up the person who gets the prize will have luck for the coming year. Sometimes a dried pea or bean was placed in as well. To get the pea meant you would not marry that year, while the bean predicted poverty.

Halloween is also known as Nut Crack Night. Unmarried couples would take two nuts and place them in the fire. If the nuts blazed with a steady light then their relationship would be smooth. If the nuts crackled and leapt apart then it would be a rocky marriage. If you wanted to be sure the fire would produce some sweet results you could use it to make Bonfire Toffee. This dark brown toffee has been popular at Halloween since at least the early 19th century.

Halloween, at least in the northern hemisphere, comes at the end of the apple harvesting season so these fruit often feature in Halloween food. Apple-bobbing remains one of the most popular activities on Halloween. Young people try to remove apples that are floating in water using just their mouths. In some places it was thought that an apple removed in this way and placed under the pillow would grant dreams of a future lover.

Those looking for a more adventurous apple game might enjoy the version that involves hanging the apples by string from a piece of wood. On the wood is a burning candle. If you pull too hard on the apple you might get a covering of how wax for your trouble. This game was so popular that Halloween was sometimes referred to as Snap-apple Night in honour of it.

Toffee apples, or candy apples, are eaten around Halloween to make use of the glut of ripe apples. The apples are dipped in a hot sugar mixture which then sets into a hard shell. No one can say when toffee apples were first made, but their familiar red colour seems to have emerged in the 1910s.

Of course no Halloween today is complete without a pumpkin. Usually these are just carved into Jack-O'-Lanterns, but they are often also cooked up into pies – decorated with ghosts, ghouls, and grotesque faces to remind diners of Halloween's history.

Bobbing for apples in water is one of the most familiar games played at Halloween – but other versions could get quite messy indeed

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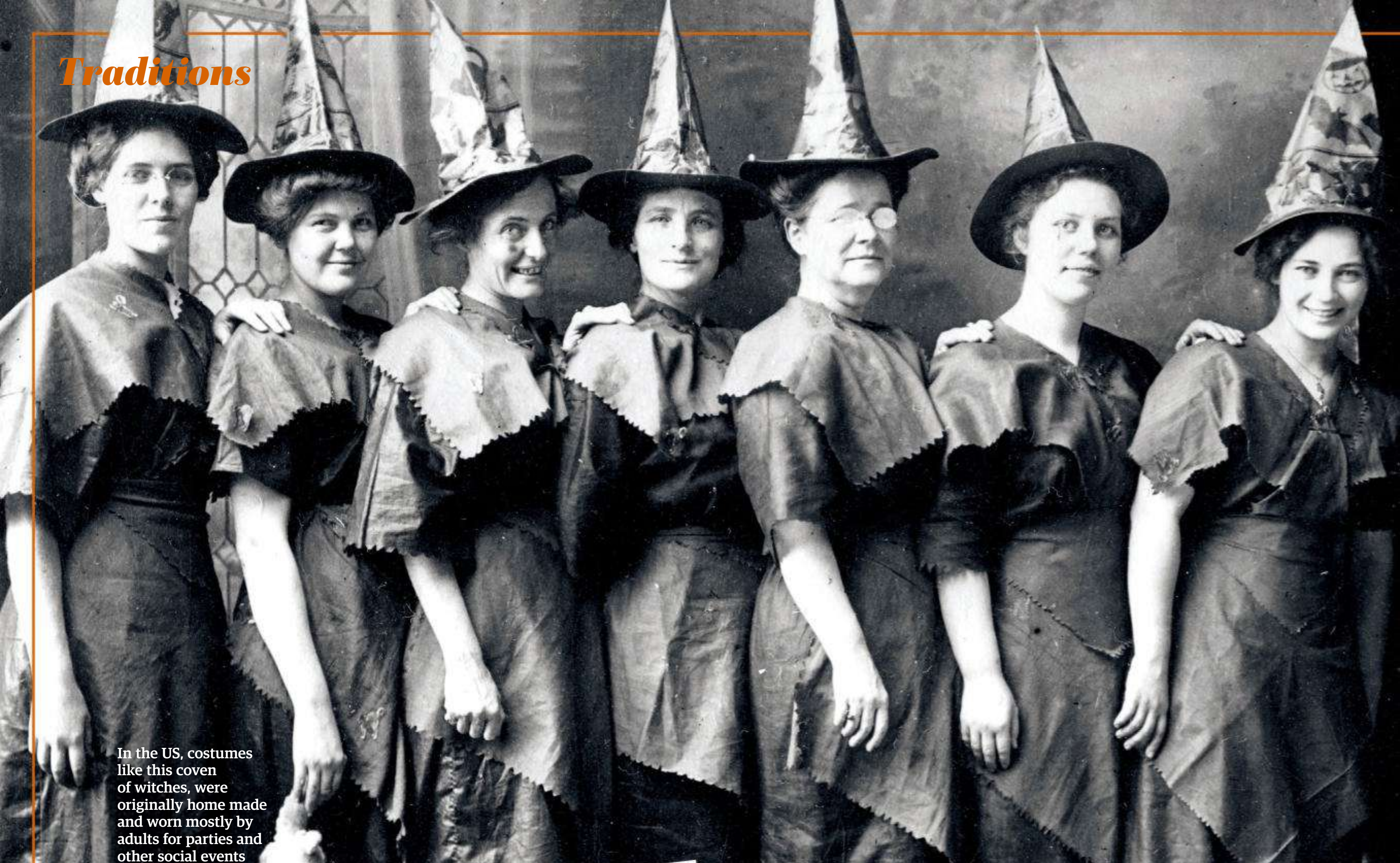
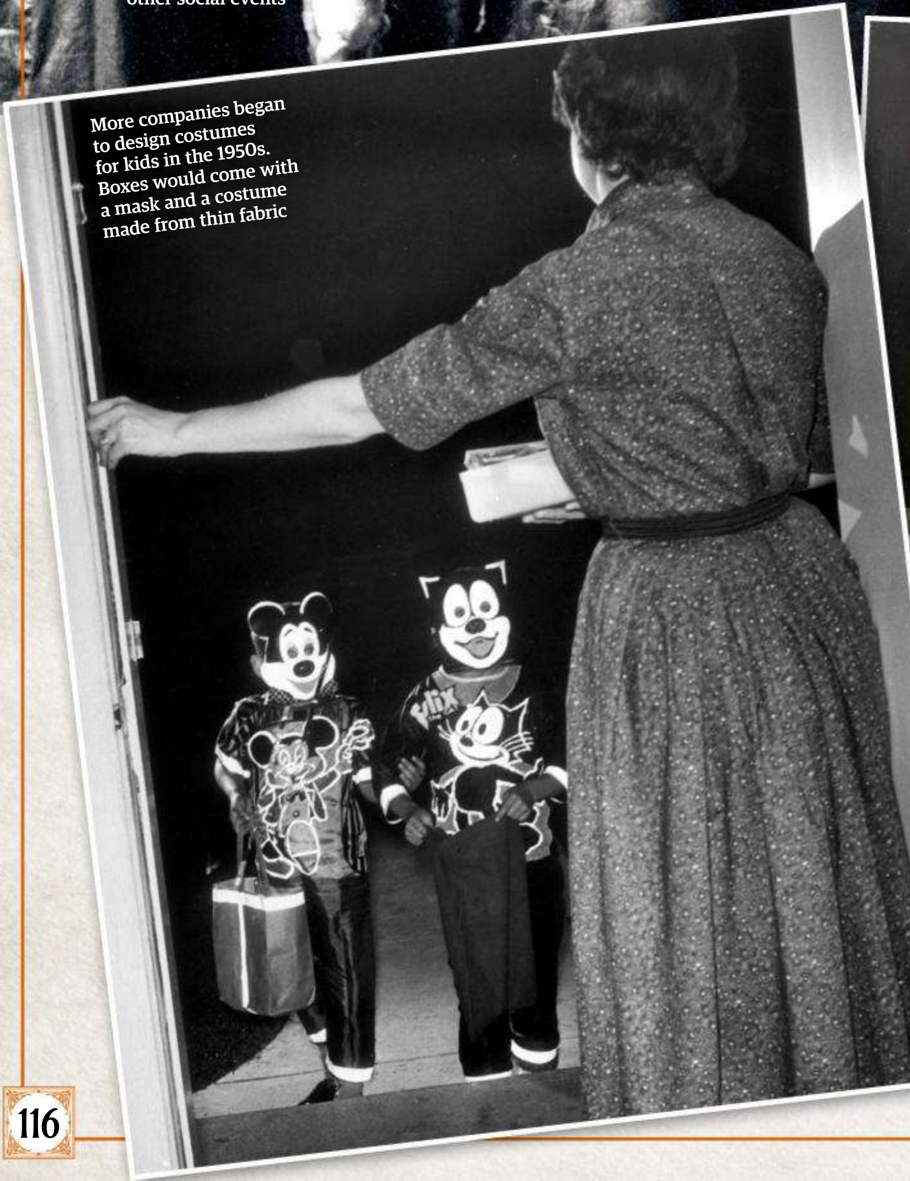
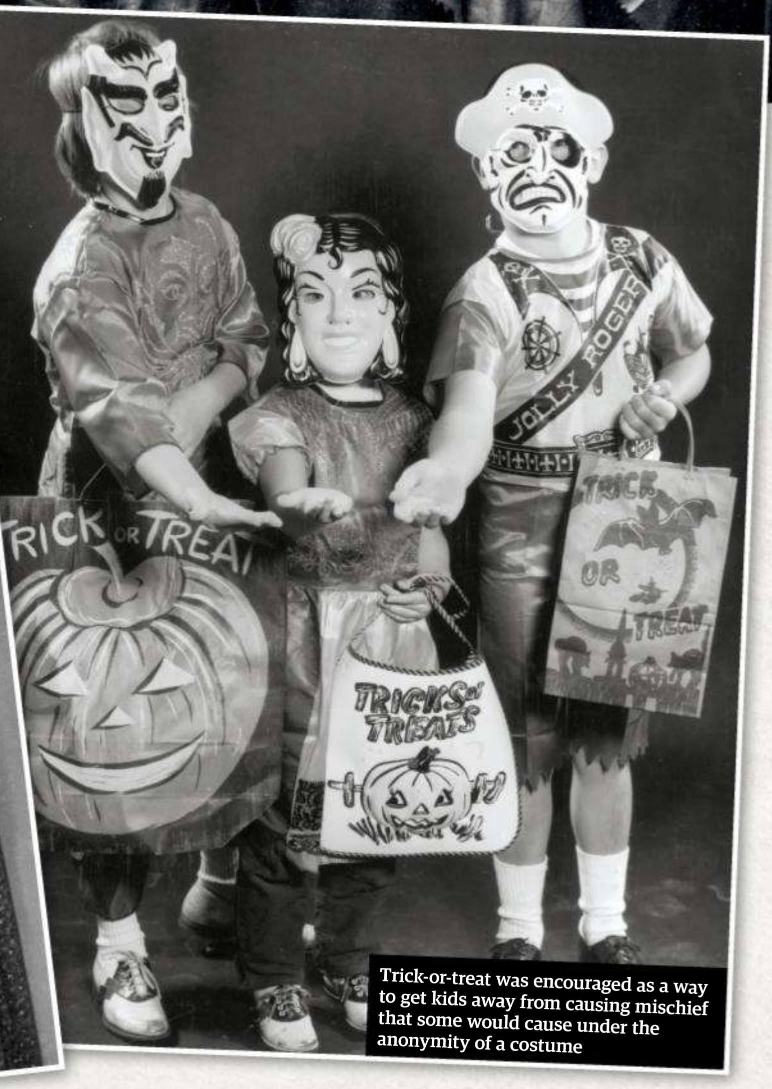


In the US, costumes like this coven of witches, were originally home made and worn mostly by adults for parties and other social events



More companies began to design costumes for kids in the 1950s. Boxes would come with a mask and a costume made from thin fabric


TRICK OR TREAT
JOLLY ROGER
TRICK OR TREAT
TRICKS 'N TREATS

Trick-or-treat was encouraged as a way to get kids away from causing mischief that some would cause under the anonymity of a costume

Halloween Costumes

From folklore to pop culture characters, dressing up has been a part of the holiday since its inception centuries ago

Written by Aiden Dalby

We may see dressing up in a costume as a thing that kids do solely for trick-or-treating, but throughout history it was something that people of all ages took part in. Throughout Samhain, a festival of honouring the dead, it was believed that dressing as the dead would disguise and protect you from any spirits wandering among the living during the night. Animal skins and furs or old clothes would be worn and faces would be painted. As Irish and Scots people migrated to the United States in the mid 1800s, these traditions were brought with them. The most common costumes around this time were skeletons, witches and ghosts. Masks made from paper mache were also popular.

Dennison's Bogie Book was a part guide, part catalogue by Dennison Paper Company that was published in the early 1900s and contained advice for throwing Halloween parties. While it featured games to play and ghost stories to tell, it also offered advice on what to wear for the occasion. It suggested bright orange and black clothing or a slip-over costume made from orange crepe paper to be worn over everyday clothing. Cut a hole for the head, have it cover the body, and then odd patterns can be drawn. By the 1900s in the United states, Halloween had moved away from its roots and became more of a party-based affair. Ben Cooper Inc, founded by Broadway costume designer and brothers Ben and Nat Cooper in 1937, obtained the rights to produce costumes based on Walt Disney characters. This began a wave of costumes inspired by pop-culture characters. As TV sets became more common in homes during the 50s and 60, the costumes were inspired by TV tropes such as cowboys, and especially *Batman* character Catwoman.

With the post-war baby boom of the 1950s came a rise in costumes tailored for kids. Affordable vacuum-formed latex masks meant they could look like their favourite TV show, comic or cartoon characters. The rise of horror movies in the late 70s and 80s led to costumes becoming scarier. With John Carpenter's *Halloween* in 1978 becoming an instant classic, horror villains such as Freddy Krueger, Jason and Michael Myers became popular. All had iconic looks that could be achieved with masks and affordable costumes, which companies took full advantage of.

© Getty Images

"With the baby boom of the 1950s came a rise in costumes for kids"

Halloween Decorations

The images and icons we associate with the holiday have been around for hundreds of years and are still used to adorn homes today

Written by Aiden Dalby

Today storefronts, and houses alike around the end of October can be seen covered in images of Jack O'Lanterns, skeletons, bats and other spooky imagery. These types of decorations have been around for more than one hundred years. The *Dennison's Bogie Book*, a catalogue/ idea book for Halloween parties was published in the early 1900s and showed many products for Halloween parties. The decorations were of devils, pumpkins, skeletons, black cats, witches and ghosts; all of which aren't uncommon today. The biggest difference was that these were all made from paper so they were easily disposable. Another notable thing about these decorations is that they were all orange and black. There are a couple of reasons why orange is a prominent colour around the season. One link is to pumpkins and the tradition of carving the fruit for Jack O'Lanterns. Another possibility is the colour's association with autumn and leaves turning colour during this time of year. Another suggested link is the bonfires that would be lit during Gaelic Samhain celebrations. The image of a black silhouette over the top of an orange background can give the impression of the object floating in front of a fire.

The Jack O'Lantern came from the Irish myth of 'Stingy Jack' who in life had tricked the Devil into not taking his soul. When Jack died he was forced to wander the Earth with nothing but a burning coal to light his way, which he put into a carved turnip. Jack O'Lanterns were first made in Ireland to ward off evil spirits. These were originally carved from turnips but as Irish immigrants arrived in North America, they switched to the more common and easily-carved pumpkins

Bats, spiders, skulls and pumpkins have been a part of Halloween for decades and are still used in decorations today

A lot of today's Halloween iconography can be seen in classic horror movies of the 1930s such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* which not only inspired costumes, but decorations too. Their gothic architecture with spiderwebs hanging down and tombstones all around is still seen today. The image of a wart-nosed witch riding on a broomstick is synonymous with Halloween, but how it came to be is disputed. The earliest image of this dates back to 1451 in a book by French poet Martin Le Franc. Witches were often a source of fear in Christian North America and this was naturally adapted to decorations for the spooky holiday. Spiders, black cats and rats, being witches' familiars, became part of the aesthetic too.

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VOUGHT-SIKORSKY
78
RIGBY'S
Easy to Build MODELS
WARPLA
OF THE WORL

Two women in the 1940 shop for decorations. These were primarily black and orange and made from paper so they were easily disposed after the holiday

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark

Ghoulies, ghosties, long-legged beasties, and other things that go bump in the night

Written by Alice Pattillo

Tales of ghosts can be traced back to antiquity and the landscape of the British Isles provided folkloric phantoms from black dogs to white women, many of whom emerged from the shadows at All Hallow's Eve. Huddling around the fireplace and sharing ghost stories was standard mid-winter entertainment in England. With the decline in popularity of the Catholic Allhallowtide, the dark nights leading up to winter solstice encouraged stories of the supernatural. During the Victorian era, the ghost story had its golden age. With the popularity of the gothic novel, the rise of Spiritualism and the development of the printing press paired with increased literacy, spooky stories went from an oral tradition to a commercialised trend. Renowned writers such as Charles Dickens and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle contributed tales of a haunted Christmas. "Nothing satisfies us on Christmas Eve but to hear each other tell authentic anecdotes about spectres," wrote British travel writer Jerome K Jerome in 1891. But while Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* proved popular in the US thanks to his established fame, ghost stories set at yuletide never fully caught on in America. Despite many US authors attempting to adopt it (including Washingtom Irving, who instead found enduring success with *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, set at Halloween) Puritans prevented their popularity, preferring to keep Christmas saccharine-sweet.

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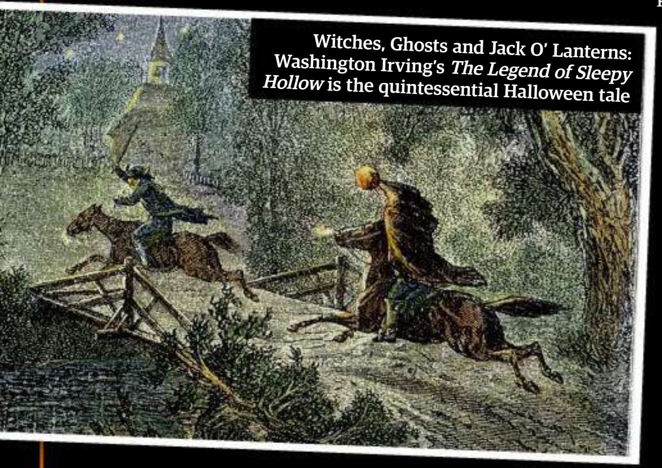
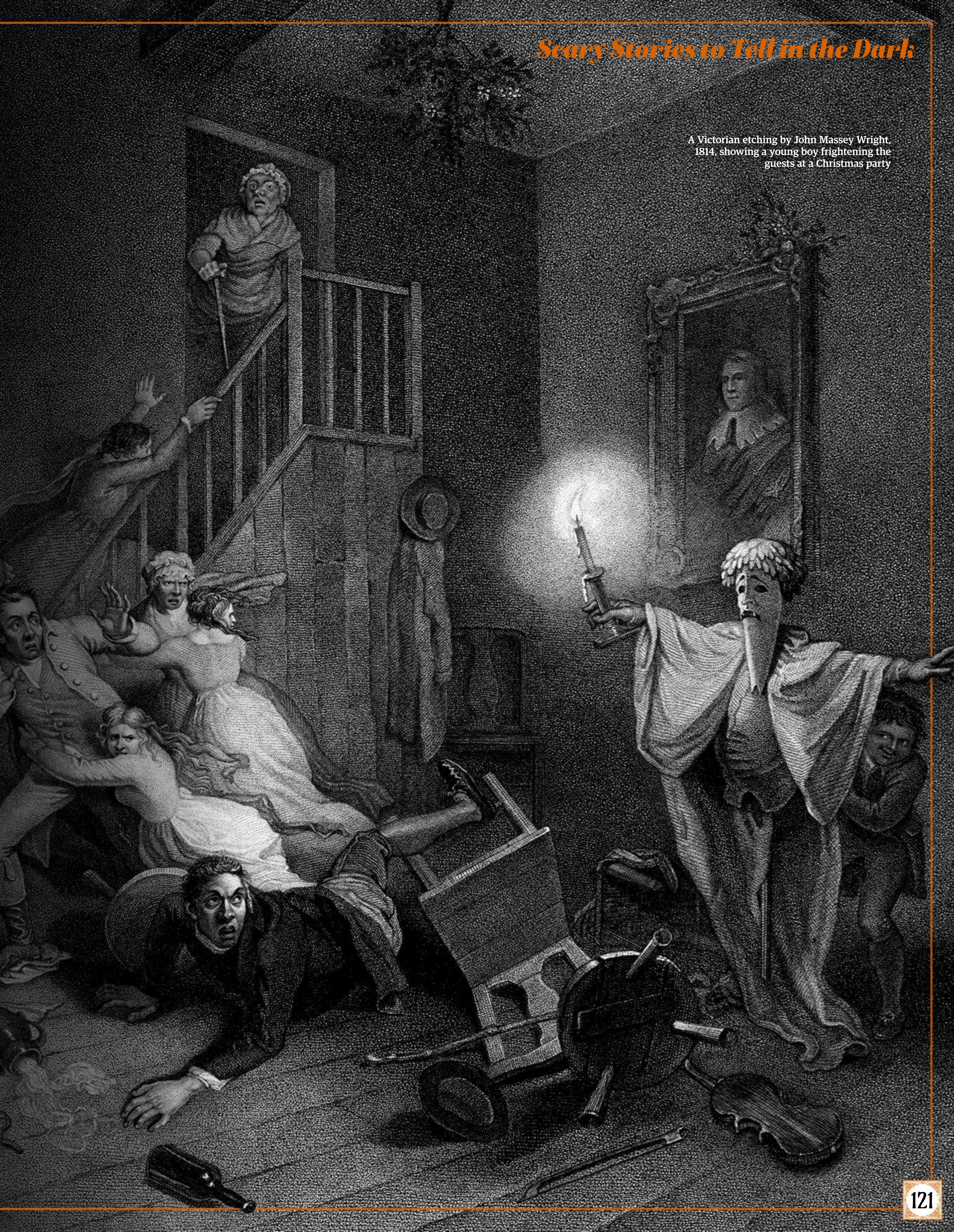


Witches, Ghosts and Jack O' Lanterns: Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is the quintessential Halloween tale

Besides, mass immigration of Gaels had brought their Samhain traditions and beliefs, and along with the melting pot of cultures already calling North America home, had resulted in Halloween being America's preferred season for sharing, and setting, morbid stories and folklore.

The 20th century saw the ascent of cinema and a new medium in which to share ghostly narratives. With the golden age of Hollywood came tales of terror in the shape of gothic monsters and haunted houses. The 1970s saw another heyday for both horror literature and film, spearheaded by American authors and filmmakers, and a new type of horror movie: the slasher. One film in particular, *Halloween* (1978), officially married Halloween with the horror genre and became a staple All Hallow's Eve watch, with a neverending slew of sequels and copycats. The film's antagonist is able to elude capture thanks to the various guises and mayhem at Halloween, a night where monsters could be lurking behind masks. The modern celebrations on 31 October had also sparked urban legends - a modern incarnation of folklore - of razors left in trick-or-treaters candy and other malicious myths. By the 1990s, America had exported Halloween back to the rest of the world successfully, and it was established as the perfect time for sharing fireside stories of ghosts and ghouls. Halloween saw all the best horror movie releases, whether in cinemas or to rent at your local video store. More urban legends emerged all over North America and even as far as the United Kingdom by the late 90s, further perpetuated by the internet, and Halloween parties were prime time to share them. While Christmas retained some of its ghosts in Britain, Halloween had long stolen the crown and continues to rule supreme as the season of spooky stories. Today we delight in nothing more than frightening our friends with terrifying tales or cuddling up on the couch with the latest scary movie on All Hallow's Eve.



A Victorian etching by John Massey Wright, 1814, showing a young boy frightening the guests at a Christmas party

HOUSE OF THE 7 TERRORS
RIP DIG M DEEP
RIP FREDDY
RIP MICHAEL MEYERS BURN IN HELL

Halloween enthusiasts will dress up their homes and gardens in celebration for the holiday with some incredible results. These can also be a local attraction

Haunted Houses

Inspired by films and attractions, people will convert parts of their homes into horror-themed homes designed to scare and entertain

Written by Aiden Dalby

While some people are content to leave carved pumpkins on their driveways, others see the holiday as a good reason to put up elaborate haunted house attractions. Smoke machines, fake body parts, monsters and more are on display to give locals a bit of festive fear.

Scary and macabre attractions were nothing new when haunted houses were conceived. In the 1800s, Marie Tussaud created wax sculptures of deceased figures such as King Louis XVI. Their likeness to the actual people was uncanny and her exhibit was dubbed the Chamber of Horrors. In 1915 the first 'ghost house' was opened at a fairground in Liphook, England. This Ghost House is still open today and can be found at the Hollycombe Steam Collection in Liphook, Hampshire.

In the United States, families would cover basements with homemade decorations for local kids to explore and keep them away from trouble. Ghosts, witches and black cats cut from cardboard would be joined by tunnels with nets and other ornaments hanging down to create a spooky atmosphere. In 1969 Disneyland opened the Haunted Mansion attraction. The ride would bring in upwards of 80,000 visitors in a single day. The Neoclassical-style mansions took guests through gardens, a mausoleum, cemetery and the house itself as visitors encountered paranormal activities. Lighting, sound and special effects to create the illusions of ghosts.

The success of the ride inspired many other commercial haunted houses to spring up. The Junior Chamber of Commerce, or Jaycees, began the Haunted House project in 1974 as a way to raise money for charity. Jaycees' original haunted house was constructed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota at a vacant house built in 1887.

These events were simple ways for charities to make money as they were cheap to produce and since they were temporary attractions, they didn't have to follow the regulations of permanent facilities. However, in 1984 the Haunted Castle at Six Flags Great Adventure in New Jersey caught fire, killing 18 teenagers. Haunted houses across the United States were shut down while new safety codes were put in place to avoid future incidents. Today there are haunted house attractions across the world. In Japan, obakeyashiki, or ghost houses, are common in the summer, as the chills from a scare are seen as a good way to forget about the warm weather.

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From the mid 20th century onwards trick-or-treating became the most popular Halloween activity for children

America and the Modern Halloween

Modern Halloween celebrations sprung from the melting pot of cultures in the 19th century USA, which re-exported them back to the rest of the world with the help of mass media and Hollywood

Written by Alice Pattillo

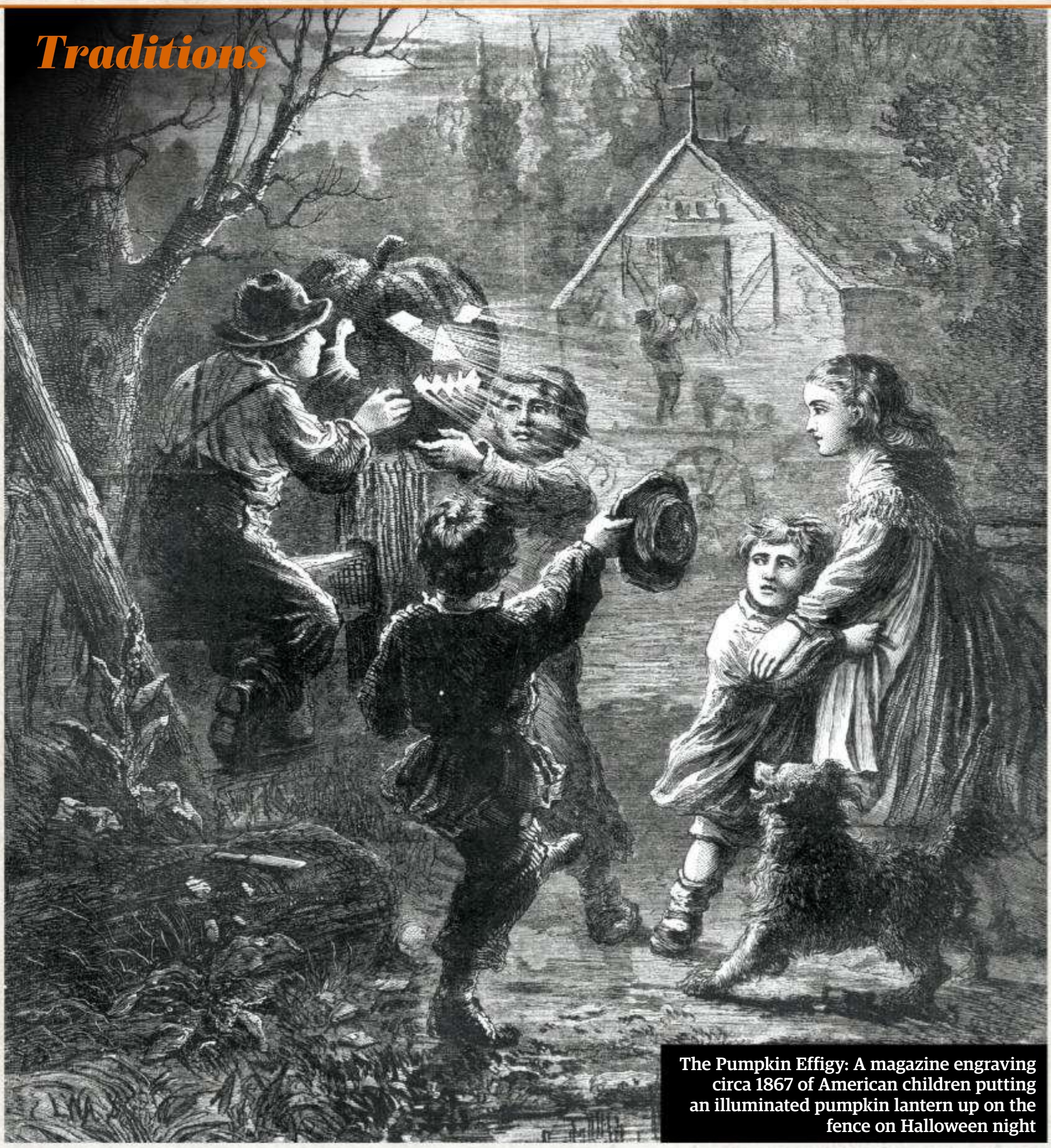
During the 19th Century, the potato famine swept across Ireland and hordes of Irish people left the homeland for the New World, along with a hefty number of Scots who had persistently headed for Canada in the past century in search of prosperity. Until this point, most holidays were banned by the United States' puritanical establishment and any mention of witchcraft could result in some cruel and unusual punishments. But with the Gaelic people, came a millennia of myth and superstitions that they clung on to in order to maintain their identities in this new melting pot of cultures.

The Irish Catholics had never given up on their Hallowtide, along with all the other pre-Christian beliefs surrounding the season, and the population of Irish immigrants had reached nearly two million by 1890. Long standing Halloween traditions such as lighting bonfires, ghost tales, superstitions, guising, pranking and divination made it across the pond with these immigrants, who attempted to keep the traditions for themselves in order to highlight their ethnicity in the New World. In Canada, the Caledonian Society in Canada, founded in 1855, celebrated Halloween with concerts of the poetry of Robert Burns, jigs and ballads. But quickly the customs, rituals and tales of Halloween spread outside of the immigrant communities thanks to opportunities for commercialisation and media attention. Halloween masks were available to buy in Ontario as early as 1874, and people were quick to realise that the American native pumpkin was far more effective to carve into a Jack O'Lantern than the turnips of the Old World.

Halloween for the masses

It was the rise of magazines that helped shape and popularise the celebration of Halloween in the US through short stories and non-fiction prose aimed at housewives. In 1898, Martha Russell Orne published her seminal pamphlet *Hallowe'en: How to Celebrate It*, full of tricks and tips on decorating and catering for the season and it proved highly popular. In 1912, she followed it up with *Games For The Season*, recommending carving pumpkins into Jack O'Lanterns for a whole myriad of uses. More harvest imagery made its way into Halloween iconography too, including maize and scarecrows. Scarecrows often went hand-in-hand with mischief-making and the late 19th century saw a rise in boys using the season as an excuse to raise hell, causing chaos by the 1930s when vandalism got out of control. To avoid Halloween getting banned, groups such as the YMCA, Scouts and local councils offered alternative suggestions to young lads keen to celebrate Halloween, including parties and parades with treats and prizes for the best costumes.

By 1918, the colours of Halloween were established as black and orange, the perfect duality of bright and dark to symbolise pumpkins



The Pumpkin Effigy: A magazine engraving circa 1867 of American children putting an illuminated pumpkin lantern up on the fence on Halloween night

Halloween haunts have started to take the place of trick-or-treating in some areas of the US, but beware, you could be in for a scare!

> "In the 80s, Spirit Halloween seasonal stores started to crop up"

and harvest juxtaposed with night and death. The early 20th century saw paper decorations from the likes of Beistle & Beistle help take the party-organising pressure off adults, as well as the release of *Dennison's Bogie Books*, decorating guides with step-by-step instructions on how to transform your home and entertainment suggestions for readers to host the perfect Halloween party. Halloween picture postcards were printed in order to wish your loved ones a happy holiday, many depicting divination rituals, black cats, witches and pumpkin lanterns.

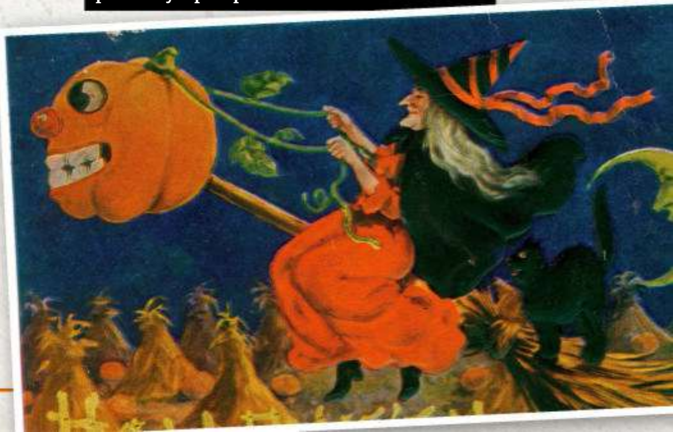
Trick or treat

Mumming and guising were two customs that had proved particularly popular with children for decades, but it wasn't until 1927 that an Alberta newspaper first recorded the use of the term 'trick or treat'. With a decline in the popularity of divination rituals, the telephone replacing much need for postcards and *Bogie Books* ceasing publication during the Depression, trick-or-treating took over as the lead Halloween activity by the mid 20th century. As trick-or-treating surged in popularity, the 1950s saw mass produced costumes and masks become commonplace due to new manufacturing techniques and the rise of plastic production. Thanks to the rise of television, companies also began licensing character costumes from television shows, such as *Howdy Doody* and *Casper the Friendly Ghost*. Plastic, battery-operated Jack O'Lanterns replaced the previous practice of visiting neighbourhood doorsteps with candle-lit pumpkins – a custom that had all too often provan fatal when home-made costumes wound up catching fire. Many trick or treaters would arrive at houses equipped with noise makers and be welcomed by home-made goodies such as cookies, fruit and nuts. However, there were now other options on the market like mass-produced candy, and the harvest-coloured, kernel-shaped candy corn proved a festive favourite. Candy companies such as Hershey's and M&Ms started marketing treat-sized bars of chocolate too, and offering special Halloween limited edition flavours. These pre-packed candies were far more convenient than the homemade varieties of the past, and when urban legends arose during the 1970s that criminals were adding poison and razorblades to treats, spreading fear across the US and dampening Halloween spirits, they proved the safer choice too.

Halloween haunts

By the 1970s, people were starting to invest in their home Halloween displays to please the incoming trick or treaters. In the 80s, Spirit Halloween seasonal stores started to crop up, offering a larger variety of home decorations, props, horror movie costumes and masks. Technological advancements in the movie business led to those in and around Hollywood

A Halloween postcard circa 1910 showing imagery that still defines the holiday today: a witch on her broom with a black cat, being pulled by a pumpkin lantern



Adult antics

After the release of John Carpenter's *Halloween*, adults showed more interest in the holiday. During the 80s, New York City's gay population began celebrating the Greenwich Village Halloween parade, complete with drag queens, puppets, marching bands and costumed attendees, and the event continues to draw two million attendees a year. Similar carnivals cropped up in West Hollywood and San Francisco. Meanwhile, in Salem, Massachusetts, the site of the infamous witch trials began their 'Haunted Happenings', the now month-long celebration of Halloween;the city has since become a mecca for Halloween lovers. In 1983, Coors beer started a run of Halloween campaigns, eventually enlisting horror-movie hostess Elvira, which saw beer sales increase drastically, surpassing those at Super Bowl Sunday and St Patrick's Day and firmly cementing All Hallow's Eve as one of the dominant party nights of the year. By the second half of the 2000s, skimpy, provocative Halloween costumes were being sold and gone were the days of ugly green-nosed witches. This newer trope was subverted in 2007's cult seasonal film, *Trick 'r Treat*, with a coven of werewolf ladies using their alluring Halloween garb to lure men into the woods and eat them.

Gay culture and Halloween have always gone hand-in-hand and the Greenwich Village Halloween parade is a carnival style celebration

with ties to the film industry starting to create their own Halloween driveway displays and later, haunted house "walk throughs" started to crop up. By the 90s, smoke machines, store-bought decorations and movie special effect props were becoming easier to get hold of and people started creating their very own Halloween immersive experiences, dubbed "haunts", all over the country, inspired by the success of theme park attractions like Disney's The Haunted Mansion, hiring professionals and working all year around to create an unforgettable experience that only runs for a few nights. Many of the owners of these haunts, who grew up loving Halloween, claim that these immersive experiences are taking over from trick-or-treating, but perhaps they are just keeping the nostalgia of the holiday alive for those too old to indulge in door to door begging for treats.

Movie madness

During the 50s, monster culture captivated television owners thanks to Universal Pictures 'Shock Theater' package of 52 horror films released directly onto television screens. Halloween adopted the film icons of Dracula and Frankenstein and these characters directly influenced the look and feel of the Halloween haunted houses. But Halloween would directly influence television and film-making in return.

In 1952, Disney had released *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad*, narrated by Bing Crosby and setting the tale of Sleepy Hollow specifically at Halloween. During the 60s, Halloween television specials were starting to export the idea of Halloween to the rest of the world. Spooky-inspired television shows such as *Bewitched* and *The Addams Family* aired Halloween specials, but it was 1967's *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* that really started the trend of Halloween television specials. By the 90s, almost all US television shows had aired at least one Halloween episode. There were annual specials from *The Simpsons* and Halloween episodes of *Roseanne*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *South Park* and more, alongside a taste for childish horror series such as *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* and *Goosebumps*, helping 90s kids to develop a taste for the supernatural.

And the big screen was no different. John Carpenter's 1978 film *Halloween* became one of the most successful independent films of all time, and gave many folks outside the US their first taste of American Halloween celebrations, as well as inspiring a new trend of 'holiday' horror movies, but none could match up to the season of spooks, and horror film marathons have become an annual Halloween tradition. In 1982, Stephen Stielberg's *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* saw massive mainstream success, and its warm, nostalgic Halloween setting, complete with magical trick-or-treating scene, and family-friendly storyline once again garnered interest into the holiday. Inspired by *It's the Great Pumpkin…*, Ray Bradbury had produced the novel *The Halloween Tree* during the 70s to express the spirit of Halloween he felt the *Charlie Brown* episode lacked. In 1994 an animated version of *The Halloween Tree* was released, the same year as Tim Burton's *A Nightmare Before Christmas* and just one year after Disney's *Hocus Pocus*, three seminal films that introduced 90s kids to the spirit of the season. And with generations of adults now seeing Halloween as a nostalgic tie to their childhood, the holiday is continuing to expand into every part of the world, and shows no signs of slowing down.

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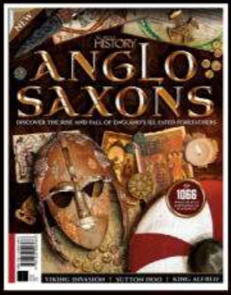
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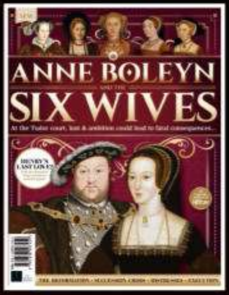
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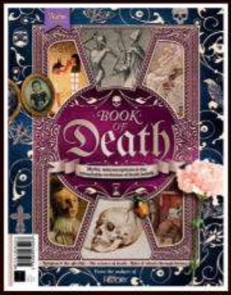
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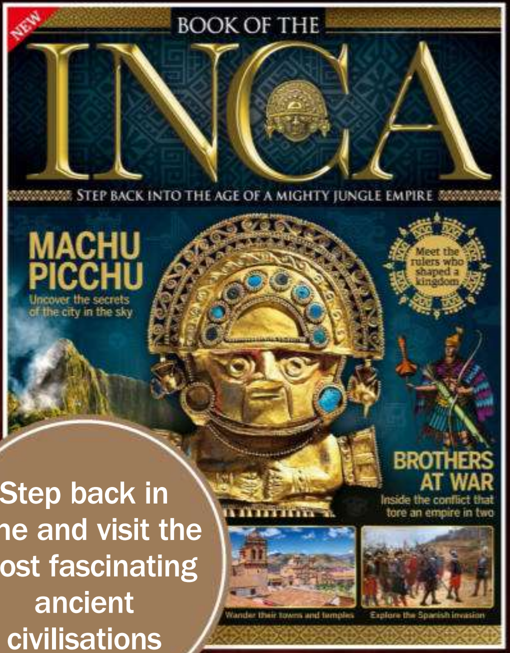
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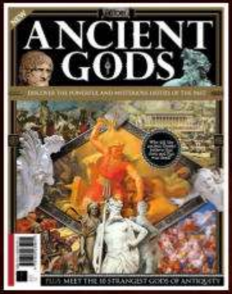
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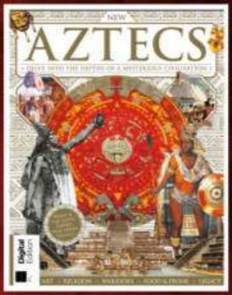

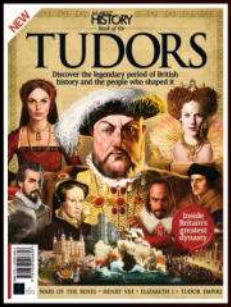
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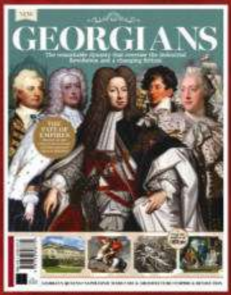
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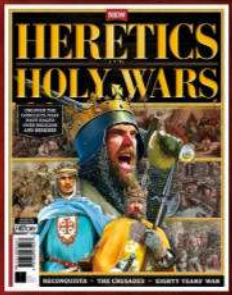
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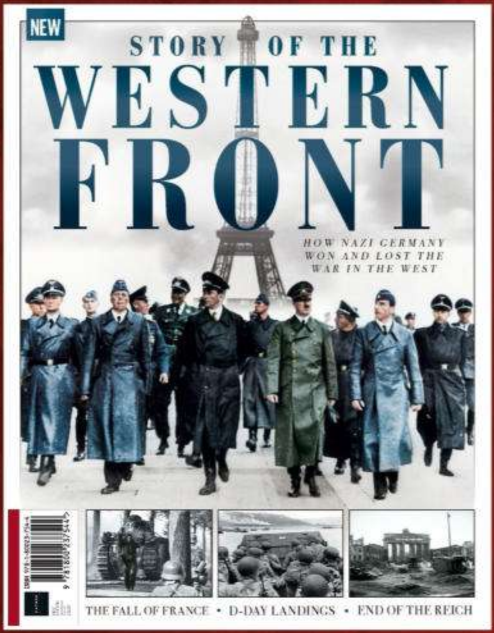
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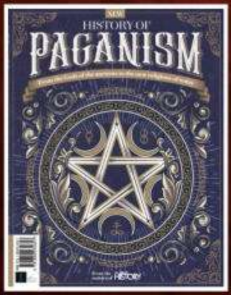
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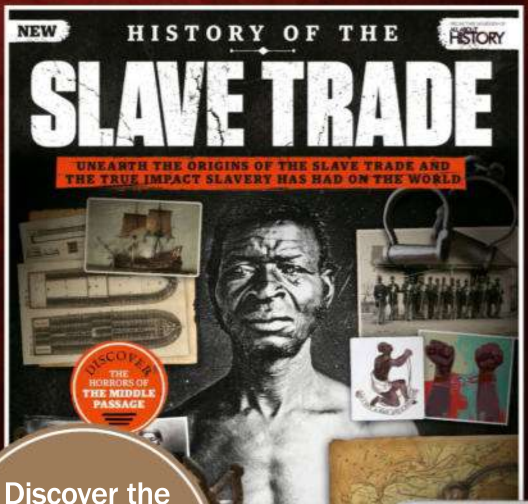
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